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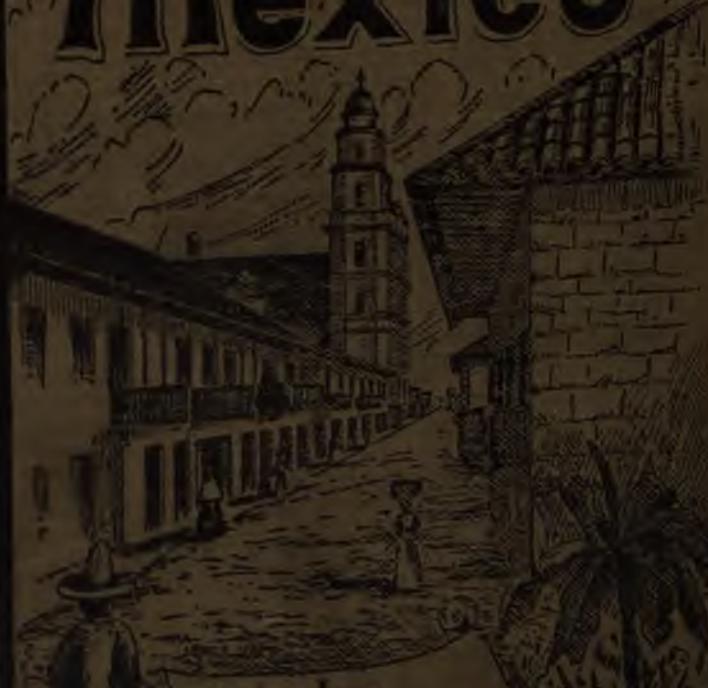
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A Glimpse  
of Old  
**Mexico**



JAS. H. WILKINS



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# A Glimpse of Old Mexico

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BEING THE OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS OF A TENDERFOOT  
EDITOR WHILE ON A JOURNEY IN THE LAND  
OF MONTEZUMA

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BY  
JAS. H. WILKINS

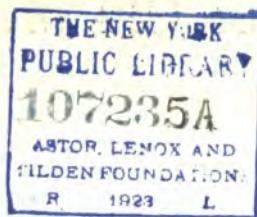
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SAN RAFAEL, CAL.

1901

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(Copyright 1901 by Jas. H. Wilkins)



These letters were written, as they purport to have been, during a two months' stay in Mexico, with no other object in view than to fill a little space in a country newspaper. During my absence, however, the employes of my printing office gathered together the series and published them in pamphlet form, not for sale, but merely for complimentary distribution among friends of the editor. Since then, there has been an inquiry for the book that has encouraged me to strike off a fresh number. My first intention was to change the form entirely, but a little work soon satisfied me that it is as difficult to remodel an old story as to reconstruct an old house. So the letters appear as they were originally written, though here and there expanded and with some errors of statement corrected.

The half-tone illustrations, although in a number of cases very imperfect, all represent actual Mexican life and scenery along the line of my travels and are from photographs taken en route.

J. H. W.

SAN RAFAEL, CAL., 1901.



## A Glimpse of Old Mexico

### FIRST LETTER.



T is easy to promise a lot of things involving a certain amount of work when you set off on a sea voyage that should contribute many vacant hours in which some mental occupation ought to be agreeable. Yet I have ever found the performance of such obligations an irksome duty and have always had ample cause to lament having entered into them. Last evening

I stood on the deck of the good ship *Colon* and watched old Tamaiapais vanish in the gathering shadows. Those who have gone down to the sea in ships know how that notable landmark of the Golden Gate lingers in the vision after the rest of California's coast line is lost in the ocean's mist. Long after the sun went down, I could still distinguish it—a mere drift outlined against the sky, which slowly passed from sight, and there was a 'last' of it. That word "last" always makes me sad. It is pursuing us all the way through life, marking graves, hopes, ambition and friendships at every turn of the road. It is never the last look, the last word, the last struggle against life, or as they say, the last hour as the journey draws to its close, or it may be the last resting place. If that infernal word *and* be never seen,ences it carries with it could only be blotted from the eye of a man, and what a night, cheer-

ful thing human life would be. It is with us to stay, however, an naturally the last look at Tamalpais stirred up the usual sombr reflections in the editor's breast. But these were succeeded by still more profound depression when I remembered a rashly-mad promise to employ the idle moments of this journey in writin about Mexico for my paper. For the truth is, I never felt less lik work in my whole career. Life has not been exactly a bed of rose for me during the last few months but on the contrary has bee crowded with incidents that leave their trace on body, mind an heart. Wearied with many sided cares, business, official and politcal, the predominant desire of nature now is to spend the nex few weeks in a loafing match, in a state of complete mental vacuity, as well as of physical rest. So, for what follows, the usu allowance must be made, for a man seldom does well what he doe not want to do at all.

Anyhow, it is difficult to write about a foreign country in a wa that will either interest or instruct the fairly well-informed reade for the simple reason that the field has been gone over so ofte and diligently. In ancient times it was different. Then, if a fe low chanced to stray a hundred miles from home, he was able t tell of marvels enough to cram a book. The story of Jason prodigious voyage in quest of the golden fleece filled all antiquit with wonderment and the echoes of it are heard dimly to this day. Yet if he ever steered his classic junk from Greece, it is certai that his voyage did not cover a much greater distance than fro San Rafael to Alviso, at the head of the Bay of San Francisco. Se in the biblical stories that begin "and he girded up his loins an set out on a long journey," from which momentous consequence follow, it merely meant that somebody went into the next towr ship; probably a trip that you or I would take nowaday and t home again for lunch. It is a well known fact, for instance, tha the journey which occupied the Children of Israel for forty year could be traversed today by a railroad train in four hours, withou crowding on steam. So, a person who now does the globe-trotting act does not have the chance he used to have, and unless h keeps his eyes mighty wide open, he might circle the planet an not find anything new to tell.

But if I wanted to pick a field to write about, with a fair prospect of presenting something novel and fresh, I would unhesitatingly select Mexico for my subject. For, as far as my knowledge goes, this most interesting country has been given the overlook by the travel writers to an unusual degree, and the literature concerning it is singularly barren of anything really valuable. I have explored libraries diligently and have found nothing that conveyed to me a fair idea of the country or its people as I have seen them. Most writers on the subject are bitterly hostile and unjust, unless we except certain descriptive publications issued under Mexican authority, which perhaps err the other way quite as much, which is equally wrong. For although I shall have many kind things to say about Mexico, it is a long way yet from being the whole thing.

This spirit of unfriendly criticism on the part of most visitors to Mexico who have written about it is not perhaps so unnatural. It proceeds, in the first place, from fixed habits of thought more or less common to all of us. We become accustomed to certain usages, conditions and methods, and by long observing them, and by practicing the same, are fully convinced that they represent the correct standards of civilization, and that nothing else does. Therefore, when we come in contact with a people who talk, think, act, dress and eat differently from ourselves, the first impression is that we have encountered an inferior race, who deserve a kind of contemptuous pity for their benighted condition. It is a notorious fact that there is not a nation today that does not hold all manner of foreigners in the utmost disdain. Now, Mexico, to most comers, is like a new world. To the American, Englishman, Frenchman or German, it presents points of divergence at every turn, and even those of the Iberian race do not feel any too much at home there. It is not very astonishing, therefore, that the average observer, who does not go very far below the surface, has concluded without further evidence that here was a people hopelessly and irremediably in the wrong.

Besides that, it was not so very long ago that Mexico had justly the very worst reputation among the nations of the earth, and it takes a country quite as long to live down a bad name as an indi-

vidual—perhaps longer. Less than twenty years ago, neither life nor property were safe there. Its government was weak and impotent, changing with every fickle gust of popular feeling, and its official life honeycombed with rottenness and corruption. Its national finances were ruined and its credit so wrecked abroad that it would not have been trusted for a two-bit meal in any money center. It was overrun by bandits and armed bodies of freebooters, who looted practically at will, until the whole open country was depopulated and almost every industry suspended, save in the immediate vicinity of the largest towns. Capital would not invest there, no matter what the inducement, and what little remained in the country was doing its best to get out at any sacrifice. In short, if there was a land on earth that seemed to be going to the devil across lots, beyond the possibility of redemption, Mexico was certainly that one.

It is hard for many persons to believe that this so recently distracted and discredited country has, within a space of about a decade and a half, undergone a regeneration that has reached to every department of affairs. That it is now peaceful, orderly and admirably governed. That crimes of violence there are practically unknown and the security of life and property are as perfect in Mexico as in any country in the world. That its national credit is now restored, its bonds eagerly sought and its finances on a stable footing. That its industries are springing into existence again, instinct with a new hope, and that syndicates of foreign capitalists are hurriedly sending their agents over the land in search of favorable investments. I am free to confess that I went to Mexico brimfull of the old-time prejudices, expecting to find a people hopelessly backward and a government under which one's rights had to be maintained pretty much by force of arms. I was in the frame of mind of a juryman who enters into the trial of a case with a "fixed opinion," and if I was forced to alter it later on, it was because the evidence on the other side was conclusive and overwhelming.

But, referring to the former conditions of Mexico, it had travelled so far in the wrong direction, was so profoundly demoralized financially, politically and socially that, if left to itself, it would

probably have continued to go from bad to worse indefinitely. The situation had become so acute that the people, however much they might desire a change, were powerless to carry their wishes into execution. The conditions demanded the genius of one man with statesmanlike qualities of the highest order, with a will as stern and inflexible as fate, and a resolute courage that never stopped to calculate dangers when once his mind was made up. Fortunately for Mexico, such a man came to the front in the person of President Porfirio Diaz. If I were asked to name the greatest statesman of all lands that the present generation has produced, I should find no difficulty in placing this distinguished gentleman's name at the head of the list. Measured by what he has accomplished for his country, which should be the supreme test, he easily leads them all. He found Mexico stricken and prostrate, hurrying to utter anarchy and barbarism, a by-word of reproach throughout the civilized world. He has restored it to order, made it respected abroad, given wealth and happiness to its people, and started it on a career of progress, the future of which is limitless. What other man is there today in public station who, in his declining years, can look back on a life work of such splendid results?

At Sea on Board S. S. Colon, March, 1901.



## SECOND LETTER.



HEN Porfirio Diaz became President of Mexico something over twenty years ago, he was generally regarded as another of the executive figure-heads set up to be knocked down. It was not long, however, before he furnished evidence that he differed in many respects from his predecessors. His first move was

to strengthen on the central authority by remodeling the army. He officered it with those devoted to himself and introduced modern regulations that changed it from little better than an undisciplined mob, as apt to fight on one side as another, to a fairly efficient and reliable body of troops. Then he organized the rurales, a sort of mounted police on the Texas Ranger plan, all composed of picked men, of tried courage, sure shots and hard riders, who have developed into one of the most capable and trustworthy constabularies to be found in the world. With these adjuncts, his authority was fixed on a reasonably firm basis. Two or three revolutions started up and he promptly crushed them with a thoroughness and attention to detail that fairly took people's breath away. The ringleaders were shot or banished and after that, getting up a revolution was regarded as something more serious than organizing a picnic party.

Then the President turned his attention to another matter. Mexico had long been cursed with a class of professional agitators who never could rest easy under any form of government, who were eternally stirring up internal strife and discord and who were the only ones who profited by it. These were, as a rule, ex-generals under the old regime, soldiers of fortune and others who for various reasons exercised considerable influence over large bodies of the common people. Diaz justly determined that there was no lasting peace for Mexico as long as these gentry remained in it, and with him to determine was to act. He accomplished his purpose as gently as possible, but where those methods failed never hesitated to employ others. Some were deported outright, some took advantage of a strong hint and left voluntarily; as for those who elected to remain and brave the storm, some accident always befell them that brought their careers to a close.

There is a story that I heard from one of the best known Americans in Mexico, that will bear repeating in this connection. Three generals of the unruly type, wearied of the humdrum life under the new dispensation, had determined to run the chances and start a revolution. They were busy on the plot, when Diaz was apprised of their plans. Instantly he wrote an autograph letter to each conspirator. They were identical in terms and ran to this effect: That the President had long observed the devotion of General \_\_\_\_\_ to the welfare of Mexico. He had also observed with deep concern that his close attention to public affairs was undermining his health and he therefore suggested an indefinite vacation in Europe, where the Executive trusted his vigor might be restored. He further advised that he depart at once, as delays in such cases were dangerous.

One General skipped over the frontier as fast as his legs would carry him. Another thought there might be some mistake about it and wrote to the President that he was profoundly touched by his allusion to the services he had rendered to Mexico; that the letter, in fact, had caused him to shed tears, but as for his physical condition, he wished to inform His Excellency that it never was more rugged and robust and that he needed no holiday. Diaz answered briefly: "I am the sole judge of your health," on the

receipt of which, the General became wise and followed his companion with due diligence. As to the third, he chose to remain and see what came of it—and he saw. A short time after, while riding over his plantation, he was set upon by masked men and shot to death. Whether they were bandits or private enemies, or secret emissaries of the government, no one ever knew, nor was the inquiry very searching. But it is certain that the General troubled Mexico no more. Of course I do not vouch for the truthfulness of this story. I merely give it for what it is worth. However it may be, the revolution industry soon became regarded as so extra-hazardous that no one cared to embark in it.

That being settled, President Diaz next turned his attention to the suppression of the bandits and freebooters who terrorized the open country and smaller towns. The individuals comprising the principal bands were well known and they were legally declared outlaws and detachments of troops and rurales were detailed to hunt them down and destroy them wherever found. This was something over fifteen years ago. At first the work proceeded slowly, for many of the poorer people in the smaller towns were in sympathy with the bandits, supplied them with food and advised them of the movements of their pursuers. This condition of things was fatal to success on a large scale and the government finally decreed that any who, under any conditions, gave assistance to bandits, should themselves come under the outlaw category and be subject to summary execution. The rule was enforced with unflinching severity. Whenever it was known that robbers had visited a village and been hospitably received, in a short time a column of troops also made a social call, found out as near as possible who the sympathizers were and promptly lined them up and shot them. Thousands were executed in that way and there is little doubt that many innocent men lost their lives. It is a bloody story that you hear of those times, but all seems to agree that it was the only medicine to work a permanent and speedy cure. The facts speak for themselves. The fear of God was instilled into the hearts of the populace and all connections between the bandits and the outside world was broken up at once. Confined to their mountain fastnesses, the outlaws were given no rest.

or mercy. One by one, they were hunted down to their death and it is many years ago since the last of them paid the penalty of his crimes. Today I should consider Mexico one of the safest countries to travel through in untraveled regions on the North American continent. There are two good reasons for this: First, because nearly all the bad men have been killed off; secondly, because the punishment is so unerring and terrible that to embark in the highwayman's trade is equivalent to constructive suicide. For any offense of that character, there is no trial. If a man is guilty, they waste no further time over his case and his promising career is nipped in the bud by a file of soldiers.

Let me give a couple of illustrations showing the prompt operation of justice, and the general security of the country:

The last hold-up in the State of Sinaloa occurred about seven years ago. An Englishman and native attendant were traveling through the mountains, when they were set upon by robbers. The attendant was shot dead and the Englishman received a wound in the fleshy part of the leg, which little mishap, however, rather augmented than diminished his powers of speed, and he made good his escape. News of the outrage was sent down by telephone to Culiacan, the capitol of Sinaloa, and the Governor of the State at once called up the Prefect of the district in which the crime took place, and briefly notified him that the ends of justice demanded that the offense should be punished within forty-eight hours. This was rather close figuring, but within the time mentioned, the Prefect reported to his Excellency that he had the honor to inform him that the robbers had been captured with the evidences of guilt in their possession, and it gave him pleasure to add that he had at once shot them.

Again, the town of San Dimas, in the State of Durango, is a center for several important mines. Every now and then, bullion trains are made up there for shipment to Mazatlan. The value of these, for the several companies concerned, is often enormous, reaching into hundreds of thousands of dollars. Yet these trains are sent down to the sea, through one of the wildest regions on earth, either unguarded entirely, or perhaps with a man with a pot metal gun in his pocket as a convoy. They are practically turned

over to the peon muleteers, and no one dreams of the trains being molested. I do not wish to run down my own great State of California, but such a thing could not be done there. If it were known there that a vast bullion train was coming down from the mountains unguarded, some of our capitalists would be forming syndicates to hold it up.

The pacification of the country being completed, the President next diverted his energy to other questions of hardly less importance. Previous to this time, there had been scarcely an attempt made to educate the masses and at least eighty-five per cent. of the population was absolutely illiterate. Mr. Diaz determined that education should be an exclusive governmental function, and should be compulsory in its nature, without which provision little could have been accomplished. This system was modeled largely after that of the United States, including normal schools for the training of teachers, and has proved a triumphant success. You find school houses dotted all through Mexico today, well supplied with modern text books and apparatus, crowded with attentive children, over whom dark-haired Minervas rule with the same dignity and grace with which our own blonde school marms have made us familiar. I think this wide-spread education of the masses is one of the most hopeful facts about Mexico today. And when we judge its common people as they have been and still are in the older generation, and criticise their poverty, ignorance and inclination never to do today what can be put off till tomorrow, just think in fairness what kind of a chance they have had in life until President Diaz came upon the scene. Remember that for four centuries they have been down-trodden, looted and persecuted till every spark of ambition and hope had been seared out of their souls. Remember that during all that weary period they have lived in a dense ignorance, into which no ray of light penetrated, and that for them all the triumphs of civilization have been but a closed book. Remember this, and you ought to find less cause to wonder that the peon classes are apathetic and unprogressive. I am confident that the rising generation, the boys and girls now enjoying the advantages of education and the discipline of school, will be very different from the one that is passing off the scene.

At Sea on Board the S. S. Colon, March, 1901.

### THIRD LETTER.



FTER President Diaz at length found himself in complete control, and at the head of a well organized and settled government, the largest task of his statesmanship still remained to be accomplished. For Mexico, notwithstanding its vast resources, was desperately poor and entirely without those modern adjuncts

of business and commerce that make progress on a large scale possible. The first step was to arrange the fiscal system along new lines. The old plan had been a merciless form of exaction from the poor, and prohibitive imposts on industry and enterprise, with an almost complete exemption of the favored classes. All this was transformed. I cannot give here a complete exposition of the fiscal system of the country, partly because space will not permit, and partly because my somewhat imperfect knowledge might lead me into misstatements. But, from all I can gather, it is founded on principles of justice and enlightened common sense, and admirably suited to promote the success of nascent industries. The main sources of revenue are tariff duties on foreign imports, internal revenue and stamp taxes and what amounts, in effect, to an income tax. As to the latter, it is laid this way: If a ranchero

is engaged in cattle raising, he pays no taxes on his herd as long as they remain on the range. But when he drives them to market and sells them, he pays the government a fixed percentage on the transaction, and the butcher who kills them and markets the meat also pays so much per carcass. This certainly had the effect of stimulating the business of cattle raising, for in the early stages, the owner is not crushed with taxes, and when the time does come to pay, the money is there to meet the demand. Similarly in mining. During development work, you pay the government only a tax that is purely nominal. When your mill begins to run, however, you pay a very modest royalty on the bullion produced —about one-fifth of what is demanded by the Canadian government from the Klondike miners—and if for any cause production ceases, taxation ceases also. I take the word of resident foreigners for it that the system, as a whole, is as wise and equitable as prevails in any civilized country. And it has yielded ample revenues as well. From being bankrupt nationally Mexico has redeemed herself, and its credit now stands high. Large surpluses have been devoted to public improvements. Among the most notable of these may be mentioned the construction of a complete government telegraph system, reaching to every village of three or four hundred souls, and a telephone system extending to principal points under control of the several states. The service charges fixed by the government are absurdly low; yet they are, nevertheless, revenue producers. If anyone wants an object lesson, illustrating how the telegraph and telephone companies squeeze us in the United States, all he needs is to compare their rates with those of Mexico.

The country was too poor to enter upon the vast expense of constructing railways. The President, therefore entered into negotiations with foreign capitalists, principally those of America and England, which resulted in the granting of many concessions, or franchises. Thousands of miles of railroad were constructed by the various companies, immense territories opened up and a corresponding impulse given to business. As I understand it, a commission of experts, appointed by the government, fixes a schedule of fares and freights, subject to modification as conditions

change, which is incorporated in the concession and must be accepted by those seeking to do business. The rates allow a reasonable return on capital invested, and no more, yet that does not seem to have discouraged railway constructing. Among other things, every company is required to attach second and third class coaches to their trains, on which the fares are extremely low.

The Diaz government has also held out many important inducements to encourage foreign capital and skill to engage in manufacturing industries, as well as to inspire native ambition in that line. In this, the demonetization of silver by nearly all important countries has contributed an enormous impulse. Mexico, a silver country, found the rate of exchange so greatly against it abroad that it could no longer afford to purchase extensively in foreign markets. It formed a barrier stronger than any tariff wall, and the question was simply for the people to manufacture for themselves, or go without. This stern necessity, stimulated further by the influx of foreign capital and mechanical skill from without, has worked wonders. This country, that a few years ago relied almost entirely on the external world for everything it used outside of raw materials, is now very nearly commercially independent and is striding ahead rapidly as the necessity to supply its own wants stimulates demand. It has modern plants to turn out all classes of textiles—such as cotton, woolen and silk goods—great foundries that are skillfully managed and furnish an excellent product, boot and shoe factories, breweries, machine shops, flour mills, and I don't know what not. There are very few manufacturing industries, in short, that are prosecuted in the United States extensively that are not carried on, to some extent in Mexico. The profits are said to be very large, which is easily credible, considering the cheapness of labor and the important inducements which the government holds out. Foreign enterprise and capital first exploited this field, but native Mexicans are now turning their attention to it. The country is generally prosperous, wealth is accumulating fast, and it is a kind of wealth that stays at home. No one will take it abroad for investment or travel, for it shrinks by half as soon as it crosses the border. Therefore, the holders of it are eagerly seeking new avenues for

putting it to useful account, and generally find the most certain returns in some of the constantly expanding enterprises of manufacture.

The greatest need of Mexico today is a general system of roads and highways. These are now wretchedly inadequate. I have seen no good roads in the country, and even the miserable tracks laid out here and there are few and far between. Practically the entire internal commerce, away from the railroad lines is carried on by mule and burro pack trains, a most imperfect, expensive and vexatious substitute for teaming. The productive powers of the country can never be fully developed until this condition of things is changed. I understand that it is the ambition of President Diaz to close the record of his great career by making at least a start in this direction, and that there are now under consideration plans for constructing several great public highways, to constitute the main arteries from which the lesser ones will radiate. When this is accomplished, and the miseries of mule transportation become a thing of the past, Mexico will assuredly strike ahead at a pace that will astonish the world.

I am nearly through with this end of the subject, but one thing more should be said, in fairness. There is still a general impression abroad that the lesser Mexican officials are hopelessly corrupt, and that in order to get along at all, one must submit to an interminable system of blackmail. Setting aside my own personal experience to the contrary, here again I submit the universal testimony of foreigners I have met, that this is not so. The very nature of the appointment of these officials makes such a state of affairs impossible. All the district and municipal officials hold their commissions from the Governors of the States, and at their pleasure. They are selected with care, and are held strictly accountable to the Executive for their acts, and an appeal always lies to him. Under these circumstances, wholesale crookedness could hardly exist. It could not fail of detection, and summary removal immediately follows that. And removal from office is the crowning disgrace that can befall a Mexican. He is branded thenceforth as "a man without shame," and the poorest of his countrymen avoids him.

I have endeavored, in an off-hand way, to show how Mexico has passed from old to new; how a moribund nation, through the genius of a single man, has risen from the very throes of death and taken its place, with a fresh lease of life, by the side of its vigorous fellows. The status of its government today is anomalous. We speak of the Republic of Mexico, but it is a misuse of terms, for it is nothing of the kind, though all the forms remain and the essentials of liberty. The government represents, in fact, the supreme will of an enlightened statesman, who has only the welfare of his country at heart. He runs the whole machine, selects governors, judges and legislatures, and whatever he says goes. They have elections still, but the way they are conducted is enough to make a cat laugh. They arrange weeks beforehand just what vote a candidate is to receive in each precinct, and can figure out for you the final result to a nicety. Mr. Richard Croker is the merest novice alongside of these Mexican experts. This seems monstrous, but it works well, is generally accepted, and what more can one ask? The explanation given is that the people are not ready for complete self-government, that with three-fourths of the electors illiterate and ignorant, it would be to invite destruction to place the destiny of government completely in their hands. But it is also claimed that their rights are only withheld for the present, and that when, with education and progress, they develop to the proper intellectual and moral standard of citizenship, they will be accorded the full powers guaranteed by the Mexican constitution.

Will the government survive the death of Diaz? That is a question often asked. Some believe that the structure reared by his genius will fall asunder when his strong hand is no longer at the helm. I think otherwise. Mexicans, of all classes, have too sharp a recollection of former miseries to ever court a like experience, and will gladly concede to the successor of Diaz the same general powers that the great President has so wisely exercised. It is said that this successor has already been selected and has been trained for future honors for many years.

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Our voyage from San Francisco southward has been barren of startling incidents, nothing noteworthy save the sharp change in climatic conditions. When one sails southward from the Golden Gate, it is natural to expect summer skies and balmy breezes all the way down the coast, but they do not materialize at the outset. On the contrary, the farther south you go the chillier is the weather and the more dismal the everlasting fog. But just as you begin to think that some mistake has been made and that you are certainly approaching the polar regions, one morning you come on deck to find the sun shining with dazzling brightness, the air warm and generous and everything lovely. Then the luxury of the trip begins. The days are fine enough for anyone but the nights are so gorgeous that it seems a sin to go to bed. At such a time, to stretch yourself on an easy steamer chair and look out on the phosphorescent sea while the breeze, soft as the touch of a mother's hand, sobs through your whiskers, is as near heaven as I ever expect to get in this world of imperfect joys. Like most of those who have begun to descend the hill of life, my habits of thought are changing. I look backward rather than ahead. I prefer to remember rather than to anticipate. And more than once, under the humanizing influence of a square meal and a bunch of good cigars, I have whiled away the night, recalling by-gone days, listening to the sound of voices that long ago were hushed forever and hearing the music of songs that will never be sung again, till the first faint streak of dawn glimmered beyond the headland of Mexico.

The glory of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company has departed. Time was when this line transacted by far the largest passenger business in the world, when every ship was loaded down to the guards and it was necessary to engage passage a couple of months ahead. There is plenty of room, now, however, for anyone who wants to travel this way. There are barely seven of us on this big ship and the steamer before carried just one lone-some passenger. Thus has the competition of transcontinental roads destroyed this once enormous business. But, if few in number, we make up for it in being very select. In the list is an elderly gentleman whose name, Prof. ——, is famous the world

over as a metallurgist, mining expert and scientist, a surgeon in the United States Navy on the way to join his ship at Acapulco, a very companionable gentleman like most of his profession, a lady who cut a conspicuous figure in society in the days that are gone, and a rather talented, though highly erratic Englishman accompanied by his wife, my nephew and myself completing the seven.

The smoking room has been the common rallying place for the men. The Englishman was perpetually endeavoring to get the Professor into an argument, to which the latter was not averse. The Briton as a rule advanced the most astounding theories that one ever heard of, and the Professor with his clean-cut reasoning, tumbled them over in great shape, but his antagonist was not a man to be easily silenced. He had read extensively, had the terminology of science at his finger's end and when cornered, had a most ingenious faculty for wriggling out of logical dilemmas, to the evident irritation of the other. One day the two had been at it hammer and tongs, the Englishman contending that it was perfectly feasible to make gold out of any old thing. The air was thick with molecular attraction, atomic forces and the like, the debate ending with considerable warmth on both sides and we walked out on the deck to cool off. A seagull swept by with outstretched, motionless wings, passing the ship on its onward course as though it had been standing still. "Look at that bird," said the Englishman, "speeding along at the rate of forty or fifty miles an hour without any effort that the eye can detect. It seems to me that common sense should teach us that the accepted mechanical explanation of flight is utterly erroneous. My own theory is that in the anatomy of birds there resides a subtle electrical or rather magneto-electrical force and that \_\_\_\_\_."

Here the old professor doubled up as if some one had smote him in the solar plexus. "Excuse me, gentlemen," he said. "I am not feeling well," and staggered off to his quarters. His voice was not heard again in our smoking room debates.

We are off Cape St. Lucas this afternoon. Tomorrow I will ascend with dignity to the hurricane deck of a mule and strike out for the tall mountains, from which a stream of gold and silver

has flowed for centuries to the sea. You will hear from me anon. I will try to tell you something about mining and agriculture in Mexico, about the people and their customs and such wayside gossip as the journey may suggest. Adios, amigos.



## FOURTH LETTER.



E arrived at San Dimas last night and are now resting beneath the ever hospitable roof of Don Daniel Burns. Here, in the throbbing heart of his great industries, amid flying wheels and the sound of grinding rock, the noted Californian has made an American home, presided over by that kindest and best of ladies, his wife. Here, day by day, with his wonderful genius for organization, he handles the details of an immense and complicated business with as much ease as you or I manage a dollar transaction.

Some time ago, I took the same journey from the sea to San Dimas, and if the truth must be told, it very nearly saw my finish. I had not then bestidden a horse, to say nothing about a mule, for thirteen or fourteen years, and the sudden experience of riding some forty miles a day over a rough mountain trail was almost too much for flesh and blood. Every nerve, muscle and fibre throbbed like a jumping toothache, and the highest descriptive talent the world has seen could not have conveyed even an idea of my misery. I faced the ordeal of a second trip with no ordinary trepidation, but I have gone through it without any diffi-

culty beyond the purely trifling inconveniences of roughing it, and reached San Dimas as fresh as a daisy. The same is true of my nephew, Harry Wilkins. But there was one member of our little party who fared otherwise. My nephew, against my earnest protest, brought with him a setter dog called Dewey, well known in San Rafael. Dewey's trials were many and various. On the voyage to Mazatlin, he was seasick, homesick and sick otherwise, and testified his disapproval of the proceedings by doleful lamentation, to the unmeasured discomfort of the steerage passengers.



Col. D. M. Burns, The Most Successful American Miner of Mexico.

His first exploit on the trail was an attempt to jump a cactus fence, from which he emerged with more stickers in his hide than a porcupine. The new forms of animal life, also, nearly made him idiotic. He tried ever so hard to get down to business, flushed an iguana, an interesting lizard about six feet long and doubtless would have come to a stand at a caiman or alligator, if one had

happened along. Then he became footsore and traveled most of the time on three legs, holding one in reserve for emergencies. He wilted under the severe heat till he had not energy enough left to raise his tail, and if it had not been for numerous water holes along the trail, caused by recent rains, his bones would now be adorning the landscape of Mexico. But that was not all. Every house along the trail and every pack train swarmed with native dogs. These are the most wretched looking and odious curs that the eye of man ever rested on. If you were to compare them in appearance to a coyote, the coyote could justly accuse you of throwing mud. And their disposition is on a par with their looks. Naturally, they regarded the opportunity to chew up a dude setter as a kind of a windfall never to be overlooked and attacked our poor quadruped in numbers at every turn of the trail. Now, Dewey in his far-away home, showed none of the warlike characteristics of the great admiral. His ways were distinctively those of peace. But when he found himself assailed in a foreign land, without just cause, he defended the dignity and honor of the American dog with a spirit and gallantry that would have filled his illustrious namesake's heart with pride. Though beset by overwhelming odds, he proved victorious in many sanguinary battles, and soon, encouraged by uniform success, and further by discovering that there was not much fight in his opponents anyhow, he took to charging the enemy with the utmost abandon, without waiting for overt acts. After that, his troubles with the curs were at an end. If Dewey ever returns to the United States, he will have lots to tell the gringo dogs about his travels in Mexico, and will doubtless become a canine Sinbad the Sailor among them.

Still, while we got through the long mule ride in excellent shape, nevertheless, this kind of traveling in Mexico is not the same, by any means, as touring in a limited train. I can give several valuable pieces of advice to any who may follow in my footsteps. In the first place, take a well-stocked grub box with you from the coast. The food supply is not abundant along the way and not always agreeable to an unseasoned palate. Take also a shot gun, for the country abounds with small game of all descriptions; quail, doves, wild pigeons and a grouse called queche—a

noble table bird. You can easily kill all the game you want without leaving the trail. Then, by all means, have one of the patent cots that fold up into a compass not much greater than a fishing pole. Insect life is rather numerous in Mexico, and if you sleep on the ground, you may have cause to lament it. We went one step furthur—we brought mattresses. This was a concession to the solicitude of female members of the family, but I am willing to testify that the idea is not half bad. But those mattresses created a sensation along the trail that has hardly subsided yet. Wise gringos usually have cots in their travels hereabouts, but I am



Mountains Around San Dimas.

certain that no mattresses had ever penetrated those parts before. More than once they were on exhibition before large and appreciative audiences of muleteers and resident peons, who expressed their wonderment variously. One said "They must be very rich." Another old sage and philosopher remarked, "If they go to sleep on those soft things they will never wake up," and so on down the line.

Also, do not allow any weak prejudice to stand in the way of

choosing a mule as a saddle animal. A mule is not a thing of beauty, neither is its character loveable but you can rely on it to carry you safely over ticklish places in the mountains when a horse would be a mighty uncertain support. A mule never loses its presence of mind, never is disturbed at trifles and has no inclination to be sensational under any circumstances. A horse is apt to shy at a moving leaf or take a mad plunge at the sight of a lizard crossing the trail and is liable to do this when his indiscretion may drop you and him a matter of five hundred feet or thereabouts. Then a mule always knows where he can go safely, and when his instinct tells him there is danger no human power can move him on. He simply plants his four good feet emphatically and nothing short of a convulsion of nature can budge him, whereas if you apply a whip and spur to a horse, you can force him to go anywhere, even to destruction itself. Mules have one little habit that keeps the tenderfoot's heart in a flutter until he understands and gets used to it. The trails are very narrow and the projecting burdens of the pack animals touch the steep hillsides and compel them to travel a few inches from the margin, which every now and then overlooks a yawning abyss. Now the mule is a great deductive reasoner and he seems to conclude that where others of his kind have gone, there he can go likewise and that the safest rule anyhow is to follow usage. So the saddle mule persists in traveling on the extreme outer edge of the trail, like his brethren of the pack train, and when you come to one of those dizzy precipices very common in the mountains, it makes you gasp for breath to look down. But it is a waste of time to attempt to make him hug the bank. You may jerk him in, but he promptly sidles out again, with head depressed and melancholy air, as if meditating suicide, for which he always has ample cause. It looks horrid but you are really just as safe as in your rocking chair at home and after a day or so it ceases to worry.

Then, you must allow for the fact that a mule is a marvelously good character reader and will ascertain your weaknesses in no time. It seemed to me as if all the mules in Mexico had me sized up. They understood perfectly that I had a chicken heart and didn't have the nerve to punch holes in the trail.

the cruel spurs that I wore, and therefore that they could loaf along with me pretty much as they pleased. In consequence I always used to be four or five miles behind the last man in the procession and considered myself lucky if I got into camp at all. But one day I happened to be a little short tempered and my mule more than commonly perverse and with a sudden impulse I drove an inch of steel into both sides of him, supplementing the same with half a dozen wallops with a small sized cat-o-nine-tails I carried. A dispensation from above could not have worked a greater change. There wasn't a more ambitious animal than mine



San Dimas Creek and Glimpse of San Dimas.

on the trail that day and for fear the tonic would wear out, I repeated the dose the next morning. I have got along with mules very well ever since.

It seems a little uncanny, at first, to have dusky shadows, swathed in red serapes, flitting noiselessly around your camp as the night falls, but a little experience soon reassures. These people are absolutely harmless, and such a thing as petty theft is almost unknown, especially so far as the foreigners are concerned. After

considerable inquiry, I can hear of no instance of camp being robbed while its owner slept. This is the more surprising and commendable, because the plunder of a well-equipped outfit would represent incalculable wealth. And I want to add this—that so far as my experience of mankind goes, you can find more absolute happiness among the peon classes of Mexico than among any other people on the earth. There is no such thing as true happiness in America, for no matter how much you have, you always want something more. There, it is an endless chain of disappointed hopes, ambitions unfilled, of heart-burnings and jealousies, and the sundering of friendship because of them. You may enjoy any amount of decent prosperity, but there is always that infernal fellow ahead who wears better clothes, has more money, owns a later style of automobile, succeeds better in politics, or moves in a higher social circle, on whom your ever-restless eyes are fixed. But the peons are all on the same plane, know only the one life, and it suits them. Beyond its circumscribed boundaries, they have no ambition. They perform their day's work—and here in the mountains it is an honest one—and expect from it only a livelihood. Apart from that, they love to gossip and are passionately fond of music and dancing. With these amusements, accessible to all, the leisure hours are never irksome, and they ask no more. Among them, too, you find the epicurean philosophy in all its purity. They live absolutely for the present, make the most of the fairweather end of existence and let the future take care of itself. If you want to make a peon mad through and through, you can pursue no better course than to exhort him to save his wages. He thinks you are covertly trying to induce him to commit a crime against his family and himself. "No, señor," he will reply, "if I have money, I will put food in my stomach and clothes on my back. I am here today, but tomorrow I do not know where I will be. While I live, I will have the best I can buy." And I am not so very sure that there is not as much wisdom in the peon's philosophy as may be found in the lives of the ~~rich Americans~~, who deliberately deprive themselves of comfort and human enjoyment in order to ~~they must ultimately leave~~ ~~behind to mock~~ closes over their endeavors.

San Dimas is a brisk little mining town of the old Spanish type, built on the spur of the mountain on which the great Candaleria Mine is located. Its day of glory was doubtless about one hundred and fifty years ago when the principal veins were first



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Old Well of Hacienda Baluarte.

opened and the vast ruins of ancient works show the magnitude of the operations. The old Spaniards builded not for a day but for centuries and time deals gently with their monuments, even though human care and labor were withdrawn long ago. Their aqueducts in this district are still in perfect preservation. The walls of the principals buildings stand intact and will continue to do so for many a year to come, though the tile roofs have fallen. The great Hacienda Baluarte, in particular, is a magnificent specimen of masonry and as you stand within its court, in the shade of mighty orange trees, a century and a half old, you can almost reconstruct in fancy the ancient times. They had some forgotten formula for preparing lime for building purposes, for it hardens with age till it becomes infinitely more resistent than the masonry it binds. Twenty years ago San Dimas was on its last legs. Its

mining industry seemed exhausted and the scant population was preparing for a clean up and departure when Col. Burns, needy and unknown, but full of the enterprise that tells, appeared upon the scene. His genius or luck, whichever you choose to call it, brought the Candelaria again to the front, likewise the Contra Estaca and El Pilar which had been forgotten for a century. Then other capitalists followed in his footsteps, opened up promising properties and now the outlook is that San Dimas will soon become perhaps the most important mining camp in Mexico.

The town is in the heart of a rugged mountain range, with many impressive peaks in the neighborhood, though the landscape has a stern aspect from being sparsely timbered. It is just outside the great coniferous timber belt of the Sierra Madre,



Col. Burns' Favorite Corner, where he Overlooks and Directs an Immense Industry.

which begins only four or five miles to the eastward.

When I commenced to write this letter today, it was my intention to devote it to a brief description of the great mining industry of Mexico. But I rambled on from one subject to another until I had about reached the limit that the acting Editor would stand, and to give even the merest outline of the mining industry here will require at least one letter by itself. But, if not that at present, I can at least relate something of a mining man, famous in the two republics, that will be of interest to many people in California. The presence of Col. D. M. Burns in San Francisco had been eagerly sought for two weeks before I left, to adjust matters of momentous consequence. Telegrams of wild entreaty were sent by the political chieftains of California to San Dimas, but still the Colonel came not, and many were the surmises as to the reasons therefor. The last rumor I heard had it that he was sick unto death and could not be moved. Well, the gentleman was never better in his life, nor in finer spirits. The old Candelaria mine, which he loves better than politics, or horse racing, or senatorships, is again on the boom and is turning out ore from several new developements that would make your heart sick to think you did not own it. If the mine was in California, the daily papers would be publishing columns about this marvelous strike, and hundred of miners would be prospecting the country for miles around. But here in Mexico, such things pass for nothing. They merely say, "Yes, the Colonel is very fortunate," and so dismiss the incident. But the grading is going on for a new forty-stamp mill, and when it begins to run, the output of the Candelaria will astonish the world. That's why Colonel Burns is here, and resolutely persists in letting the other fellows walk the floor. He has his business eye on probably the biggest thing that ever came his way during his eventful career.

San Dimas, State of Durango, Mexico, March 12, 1901.

## FIFTH LETTER.



ERHAPS a word here about the people of Mexico as I have observed them may be of interest. When I speak of the people, I do not refer to the high caste group of wealthy, educated and refined men and women. These you can find in every civilized country and they are very much the same the world over. But while they may influence, they are

not the ones that make a nation. If you wish to examine the potential forces on which the future of a race depends, you must get well down among the masses and see of what stuff they are made. They supply the creative power, they make a community rich or poor, progressive or unprogressive, ambitious or sluggard. Carnegie, Rockefeller, Vanderbilt and Pierrepont Morgan never would have amounted to a row of pins by themselves. They have piled up their hundreds of millions simply and solely because of the genius and splendid energy of the American people, which they had the organizing ability to take advantage of. Among a race of loafers, they would have had to skirmish to make their daily bread.

In the great mass of Mexican people, the Indian stock predominates. I should say that at least three-quarters of their an-

cestry could be traced back to the aboriginal populations of the country. But it must be remembered, in the first place, that the Mexican Indians were of a far higher type intellectually than the nomads of the north, that they had a written language, had solved many astronomical problems, were expert builders, had a regularly organized government and in short, had traveled far on the road to a high civilization. How sturdy the stock was, is best illustrated by the fact that their descendants are here today. Following the Spanish conquest, after the natives had been made duly



Scenes in Humble Life.

aware of the priceless blessings of christianity, they were divided

into "repartimientos," or allotments, and assigned to the various conquerors who happened to have a pull. Then they were duly branded on the cheek to locate their ownership and became chattels of masters who exercised over them the absolute right of life or death. The greater number of them were sent to work in the mines, the remainder being employed to raise corn for their food and to pack it into the mountains. The miners passed practically their whole lives in the damp underground workings, to prevent attempts to escape. I have seen in an old mine the niches cut in the rock walls, where they slept. It was as rigorous a form of slavery as ever existed and in most parts of the Americas the native races crumbled under it to dust. Less than fifty years of the system practically exterminated the once teeming aboriginal population of the West Indies. After a hundred years, in Chile and Peru there remained not more than one-fifteenth of the estimated population at the time of the conquest. The Mexican slaves alone survived and when freedom came at length early in the present century, they were if anything more numerous than when Cortez and his followers landed in their country. So, physically, at least, they must have possessed the rugged type that goes with a survival of the fittest.

Even when liberty was given them, it seemed as though they had gained nothing by the change. Under their Spanish masters, they had at least some protection from outside foes, just as any valuable chattel is guarded. During the stormy half century succeeding Mexican independence even this was withdrawn. In that distracted period, with revolutions occurring every few months and the country swarming with free-booters, outlaws and desperadoes, the helpless people suffered even more severely than in the days of bondage, for the population of Mexico decreased rapidly, the loss being estimated variously at from two to five millions.

And in their contact with European civilization, the native races acquired nothing worthy of mention. Their Christianity is still little better than a superstition, founded, not on a belief in God's infinite love and mercy but on the dread of what He may do if He gets mad. Not the slightest effort was made to convert them and it is perfectly safe to say that twenty-five years

a thousand was able to read or write. In no sense was their condition improved. Cortez found the native races clad in cotton fabrics and cotton is the dress of the lower orders to this day. They used the most primitive agricultural implements—a sharp stick to make holes in which seeds were deposited, a wooden spade and sometimes a wooden plough—and these are still employed in many parts of Mexico, though in other sections modern appliances have replaced them. Even their food has been modified very slightly. The native beans, or frijolos, tortillas or baked



Peons Shelling Corn. The Grain Falls through the Frame and the Wind Separates the Chaff.

cakes of maize, chili peppers, tomatoes, together with indigenous

fruits, are the great staples they were four hundred years ago and are prepared for consumption the same way. In every well regulated peon household, you will find the Aztec metate or stone on which the corn is hand ground and the ancient pottery vessels in which their food is cooked.

It is scarcely conceivable that the experience of four such centuries would fail to leave an evil impress on the national character of any people. For my part, the only wonder is that they did not revert to utter barbarism when finally left to themselves, just as many races have done after being long held down by the strong hand of physical restraint. It is not an agreeable task to enumerate the shortcomings of a people but as I am endeavoring to present a perfectly impartial picture, this view of it cannot be overlooked.

First and foremost, I should place among the weaknesses of the Mexican character an almost indescribable lack of anything approaching thrift. I have briefly alluded to this in a previous letter. You will employ your time better explaining to one of them the mathematical problems relating to the precession of the equinoxes than by endeavoring to make him believe that any good can come from the practice of economy. Whatever they make goes as it comes, without a thought for the morrow or the evil day ahead, and when their money is gone, they never hesitate to pawn their little personal effects and the very clothes on their backs. If you wish to hire a man who has been out of employment for a few days, it is almost a certainty that you will have to redeem his raiment in order to enable him to make an appearance in public. Their recklessness and necessities are preyed upon by a swarm of pawn brokers, about as conscienceless a crew of pirates as can be found the world over. When you find a genuine shark among a people given to free-handedness, the chances are that he will go the limit and something more. This is particularly true of the Mexican pawnbrokers, who are absolutely without pity or remorse. I have watched their hard, cruel, merciless faces as they worked some unhappy peon to a finish and it seemed to me that the toughest bazaars on Kearney street looked like an enlightened and enlightened by comparison. In some of the large centers,

the government has opened pawnshops of its own, great establishments where money is loaned on any collateral on reasonable terms. But this system has not extended to Sinaloa or Durango and the way the poor people are pillaged there in the private pawn shops is one of the curses of the country.

The unthinking spendthrift habit is without doubt a very grave national defect. Mexico never can be at her best until the masses begin to accumulate and have a more substantial stake in the country than they now possess. My impression is that it will take some time to work a cure, so profoundly has it taken root in the human soil, but that it will finally be overcome. I have no reasonable doubt for it does not seem to me an inherent vice, but rather the inevitable result of the conditions under which the people have lived for centuries. During the long period of slavery, no possible incentive for thrift existed and there was nothing for the poor devils to save anyhow, for they received from their masters only the most pressing necessities of life. Then again, after emancipation, for two generations or more, the ~~distracted~~ state of the country, would have discouraged saving ways, even if they had existed before. Every little town and farm house was pillaged by revolutionists or outlaws two or three times a year until it seemed the very part of wisdom to use anything valuable that came to one's hands in purchasing high priced food and fine raiment and promoting hilarity in general, rather than to hoard up the pesos until some fellow came along and took them away. Thus the acquisitive instinct became rudimentary among the masses, naturally enough, and it is going to take time and patience to develop it again.

Another failing is their common indifference to financial obligations. I refer of course to the lower classes. The Mexican merchants and business men, I have found quite up to the ~~average~~ moral standard. This weakness is to a large extent a supplement of the other. Being so everlastingiy prodigal with their own money, it is not to be wondered at that they will be free with yours, if you give them a chance. They will run themselves head over heels in debt at every opportunity without the slightest thought of how it is going to be liquidated and precious little con-

cern for the same. They view such matters in the true philosophic spirit, never are annoyed by them and cannot see why anyone else should be. If a disposition is shown to become disagreeable about it and perhaps demand that the debt be worked out, they gather their small belongings and go to some more congenial clime. It doesn't cost much to move in Mexico. Of course they are the chief sufferers by this habit. The people are at the



A Mexican town, showing houses and church.

mercy of creditors and yet are compelled to do this to receive credit for their debts. The result is that they are

**where the druggist's familiar two per cent profit is invariably exacted.**

These, in my judgment, are the two glaring defects in the Mexican character and the hardest to be overcome. You will hear many other indictments against these people if you listen to certain critics. They will tell you that they are instinctively idle, treacherous, immoral, untruthful, thievish and habitual drunkards. All that I can say is that my experience and observation do not bear out any such accusation. I have been right among them and found them exactly the reverse. Of course, there is the usual proportion of black sheep in evidence, but I am writing of the people as a whole. And that brings me to the pleasant part of this subject.

In the first place, so far from being a lazy people, I consider Mexicans thoroughly industrious. Most writers who have taken the opposite view appear to have formed their opinion from observations from a Pullman car window, which undoubtedly discloses a goodly number of shiftless looking loafers around every railroad station, or perhaps from a visit to one of the tropical coast towns, where you can generally find a considerable portion of the population snoozing the hours away in shady corners. But deductions from any such basis are most misleading and do a huge injustice to the great body of the people. To see them in their real, active life you must get out in the country where the earnest work is done. Follow a pack train for a day or two and mark the incessant labor of the drivers under a blistering sun to keep the line moving or head off some cantankerous animal that wants to fly the procession; go into the lumber camps and watch say a dozen of them pick up a stick of lumber that weighs more than a ton and pack it up hill and down over any kind of a trail, a feat that American laborers would shy at every time; then visit the mines and observe the steady swing of pick and sledge for twelve mortal hours, which is the regular day's work in Mexico; finally go among their little farms and note the prodigious labor involved under their crude methods in planting a crop, harvesting the same and bringing it to market. If after doing this in a fair-minded way, you still declare the Mexicans a lazy race, I can only

**say that your idea of what constitutes industry is very different from mine.**

Nor is their industry a mere physical effort and unintelligent. You can notice among them a distinct mechanical capacity and a good mechanic is a man to be admired. We have a plumber at our mine nick-named Abraham Lincoln, from a rather remote resemblance he bears to the great commoner, who is as thorough a master of his trade and as resourceful in applying it as one could wish to see. He has had charge of the construction of several great pipe line plants in this section and of the complicated connections with the mechanism of a silver mill and his work has always remained as a monument to his skill. Very fair carpenters and masons are to be found in abundance. At mining, from handling compressors and filling the sub-ordinate positions in a mill down to the purely manual part of the business, they are efficient and reliable. These qualities have had the slimmest possible chance to develop in the past but with the revival of industry and the general education of the masses, there is good ground for the belief that marked progress will be made by the people of Mexico in the mechanical line before the century is much older.

As to their treacherous ways, I have also failed to observe them; quite the reverse. To the best of my judgment, they are a singularly open hearted and guileless race, almost like children in their simple hospitality and friendliness, if you treat them right. The real trouble is that quite a sprinkling of foreigners do the other thing. I am sorry to say that I have met some Americans in Mexico whose conduct has made me blush for my country. To say nothing about more serious offenses, their manner alone is too often of the kind to inspire hostility and a spirit of reprisal. They walk all over the poor people, bully them and show their contempt in a thousand ways and then wonder because they are not liked. Of course, such conduct is resented as it would be in any part of the inhabited globe and if an opportunity presents itself to play for even, it is seldom neglected. Then the cry is raised that Mexicans are treacherous. But if you investigate to the bed-rock, I think you will discover that in practically every

case where a foreigner has got into trouble in Mexico, landed in jail or been run out of the country, the sufferer has been one of the fellows who have systematically outraged the feelings of the people beyond the possible limits of endurance. It is only fair to add



Farm Mules. Corn Drying on Line Overhead.

that these are the exceptions. Most Americans and most other foreigners here have the fundamental instincts of gentlemen and their relations with the natives of the country are perfectly amicable.

Another count in the indictment is the loose relation of the sexes. There is foundation to the charge to this extent at least

that ceremonial marriage among the peons is the exception, not the rule. Two marriages, if any, are usually performed the civil and ecclesiastical, and as both mean fees, the thrifty people usually prefer to celebrate their nuptials by having a good time, instead of squandering money on priests and magistrates. There are about forty families at our mine and in only two cases are the heads joined in lawful wedlock. The balance have simply elected to live together in the condition of husband and wife without further form than mutual consent. I know that some of my readers will cry out in horror at the statement and wish never to hear of a Mexican again. But, on the other hand this free and easy relation is maintained in a majority of instances, with a good deal of fidelity, as a rule to the close of life. Of course, if a gentleman becomes tired of his matrimonial lot, he is privileged to terminate it summarily, but our own conjugal bond does not hold very fast when either party wishes to sever it. They are kind and indulgent to their wives or "women," delighting to load them down with fine raiment and Jim Crow jewelry, when luck comes their way, and are devotedly fond of children, which are propagated in swarms. If you view these conditions from a purely religious standpoint, they are terrible beyond expression. If you look at them as a plain philosopher, the picture of humble home life in Mexico is not an unpleasant one.

As to being of a general larcenous disposition, I know otherwise from abundant personal experience. Of course, there are thieves, pickpockets and crooks of every grade among them but they are no more types of the race than are the jail birds of the United States representative of American manhood. I have been among the common Mexican people in all sorts of ways, under conditions admirably suited for light fingered operations and often with an array of luggage that must have looked like a boundless fortune to a Peon and never on one occasion have I had cause to lament the loss of the smallest article. For myself, I wish no better proof that they are trustworthy. They possess a lively imagination and the rich Spanish language, which deals largely in superlatives rather tends to habits of exaggeration. Everything is the biggest, the richest, the most beautiful and so on and you must exercise con-

siderable caution in assimilating what you hear. But it isn't a malignant kind of lying after all, very far different from those kinds of untruth that have made the vice odious the world over. It is rather a picturesque form of drawing the long bow that doesn't do anyone special mischief and does not necessarily pro-



Verano. A Mexican Mountain Farm.

ceed from a vicious heart. As for intemperance, there seems to be a strange appetite for alcohol the world over and the Mexicans are not exempt from it. The majority of them go on occasional jamborees, but the chronic soak is a rarity and the vice very seldom goes to the extent of unfitting them for the business of making a living. I should say that they were no better or worse than

people in the same station of life in the United States. If anything the comparison would be in their favor.

There is a class of Mexicans with whom the sojourner comes in close personal contact and from whom he can gather a very fair estimate of the general character of the people. These are the "mozos" a kind of equestrian valets of the Sancho Panza description. Everyone who wishes to be considered somebody must of necessity have one of these attendants as he travels through the



Verano. A Typical Mexican Farm House.

country, or be rated forthwith as poor trash. Nor are they, by any means, mere ornamental figureheads. They are, in fact, as effi-

cient servants as I ever met. They are on the lookout for their employer's comfort every minute. If your saddle girth needs tightening, their watchful eye always detects it. If your mule casts a shoe, they carry their little blacksmith's kit with them and have a new shoe on in a jiffy. They always find you the coolest place in the neighborhood for the noon siesta. If you are thirsty, they know it by intuition, scamper off and return in a few minutes



MEXICO. A "MILLO" OR SUGAR MILL. The long arms are operated by mule power. The milled sugar is then taken to a granary and is in this revolving in contact with a stone wheel. A Mexican feeds in sugar cane, stalk at a time, into the milled sugar wheel cylinders.

and after you filled it with cold water from some spring that only

mozos know about. They are familiar with the best stopping places for the night for hundreds of miles around and the sublime impudence with which they will take possession of a "casita" in your name, elbow the occupants, order them to make way for the señor, get a move on and do it quick, is a sight worth seeing. Then



The Downfall of Lario.

after your luggage has been cared for and supper prepared, you can listen to a panegyric on your virtues such as you never heard before, when the mozo has time to engage in conversation with your hosts. I suppose the rogues indulge in these rhapsodies so as to shine themselves in the reflected light. At all events, you will learn that you are wise, brave, rich, generous, of illustrious birth, related to McKinley and last but not least "muy caballero" or very much a gentleman. If a person is profoundly enamoured of himself and loves to hear his praises chanted, I do not know of

anything that will do him **more** good than to take a trip through Mexico with some of the mozos I have met. In addition, they are imperturbably good natured, no matter what happens and unless they are ill used become sincerely attached to their employers. I never parted from a mozo that he did not tell me that his heart was very heavy and one at least shed real salt tears when we reached our journey's end. Come to think of it though, there was one exception and I will now proceed to relate the story of it, for it is pertinent to the subject of this letter.

The relation between servant and employer in Mexico is stately and ceremonial and never relaxed for one moment. Thus, for instance, when you address a servant, you first call him by name, as "Juan." He answers "Senor," off comes his hat like a flash and he stands in an attentive attitude to receive your orders. Similarly, when you are out in the mountains, it is the mozo's duty to stand bareheaded at a respectful distance while you eat, attend to your wants, if you have any and never touch a morsel of food till you signify that you have finished. I had the necessity of enforcing these rules and regulations properly impressed on my mind when I first visited Mexico and was warned that if a certain distance were not kept between employer and employed, the latter invariably became sociable and "fresh" beyond all indurance. I have noticed a similar tendency among other people.

Well, it happened once that I had to ride across the Sierra Madre mountains from San Dimas to the City of Durango, through one of the wildest and most unfrequented sections of Mexico. A Mozo was picked out for me with due care, a likely young fellow called Lario, with a splendid record for ability in his line. We were soon far up in the mountain fastness and that feeling of mutual dependence began to assert itself that comes naturally enough to a couple of men when they have to make their way through difficulties, with the suggestion of possible danger thrown in. This is a mighty leveler of social distinctions at all times. If my great and good friend, Edward the Seventh, were shipwrecked on a desert island with one of his footmen, I doubt if rank, station and precedence would bother them very long, especially if the footman were a bigger man than His Royal Highness.

At all events, Lario's elaborate ceremony became almost grotesque under the circumstances and I yearned for a little good fellowship, so when we halted for the night and the camp fire blazed and the grub sizzled merrily in the frying pan, I told Lario to keep his sombrero on his blooming head, sit down to dinner with me and be sociable. And maybe he wasn't. We tossed off the regulation mescal cocktail, ate like a pair of cormorants, had a cup of black coffee, smoked cigarettes and sang Spanish love songs till our voices gave out. But what were the consequences? In two days Lario became the most worthless vagabond that ever happened. True, he loved me like a brother and was willing to do anything in the world for his dear amigo Don Santiago, except work. It almost took a traction engine to get him out of his blankets in the morning. I had to make the fire, cook the breakfast and do most of the packing in order to get started at all. I threatened to rebuke him with a club if he failed to mend his ways and then there was ill will and sullenness which lasted till Durango was reached, where we parted with mutual disesteem. If you ever visit Mexico, do not forget the incident.

Nor did the wrong done Lario end here. He went back to his old haunts and resumed his occupation, but no one could tolerate his changed ways. He was discharged by one after another. Presently he had to seek new employment and then his descent was awful. A year later I met him on the trail driving a pack train of burros. Now, the drop from the station of a pampered mozo, usually employed by free handed Americans, to the abject position of a burro puncher, is a thing too terrible to describe adequately. The degradation of Dreyfus was trivial in comparison. Poor Lario gave me one sad look that recognized me as the author of his ruin, then dropped his eyes and passed on.

I have spoken of the preponderance of the Indian blood in the masses of Mexico. But the Spanish strain has been a strong one, prepotent to transmit many of the admirable qualities of the Iberian race and modify the harsh lines of the aboriginal features. In fact any infusion of foreign blood seems to take a powerful hold. Pure blond types are not so unusual and very persistent, when the crop is once sown. Often, it is not difficult to trace them

back to their source. For instance, long ago, a red-headed Irishman landed at Mazatlan, journeyed southward in the direction of San Blas, then turned eastward toward Tepic and at length reached the City of Durango in this round-about way, after which he was lost track of. It was not a long journey—say a thousand miles at the utmost—but it took the Irish gentleman many years to complete it. He was of a jovial disposition, always ready to halt at any hacienda or pueblo where the cheer was good and the eyes of the girls bright and never in a hurry to move on as long as conditions remained agreeable. He left no great impression on the history of the nation but along his itinerary, a red-headed generation of children sprang up which, singularly enough, marked his exact line of progress through the country, like milestones on a county road. Of course, I do not wish to be understood as casting an undeserved aspersion on the departed Hibernian or of drawing any questionable deductions from this peculiar coincidence.

I have given you herewith personal impressions of the Mexican people, the bad together with the good, just as they have been seen through these particular eyes. Other eyes are just as good and have seen differently. Time alone will show which is in the right.

California Mine, State of Durango, Mexico, March 17, 1901.

## SIXTH LETTER.



UR party reached the hacienda of the California Mining Company, of which soulless corporation I have the honor to be President, eight days ago, and we have been luxuriating since in the finest climate on earth. The elevation is nearly six thousand feet above sea level, and such a thing as oppressive heat is unknown. The days are mild and

generous, the air exhilarating and the atmosphere so dazzlingly clear that the outlines of mountains seventy-five miles away stand out boldly, clear cut against the indigo blue horizon. I am writing now about the period from 8 a.m. to about 7 p.m. But perhaps it isn't cold when the sun goes down! and maybe the editor doesn't pile on the blankets when he seeks his lowly couch! At the beastly hour which custom has fixed here for breakfast time, everything is frozen stiff as a board and the thermometer down to twenty-seven or twenty-eight degrees Fahrenheit. But, somehow, you hardly notice it after the awful agony of getting out of bed is over, and, as I said before, by 8 o'clock everything is lovely. These sharp changes of temperature, however, are anything but unhealthful. In the last year, there have been at least a hundred and fifty people living at this camp and during that period there has not been a single case of illness, nor an ounce of medicine, until my esteemed nephew and myself unlimbered the small-sized apothecary shop which female solicitude had provided. This sec-

tion, in short, should be shunned like a pestilence by doctors and druggists, but for every one else it is all right.

We are located in a kind of transition land. This is certainly a temperate climate. Quite as much so as the country around the bay of San Francisco, with the difference that the nights are infinitely colder. But not more than a quarter of a mile from our



Looking Down the Canyon, from California Mine's Main Tunnel.

house or shack, to be more accurate, there is a kind of jumping off place where you can look down at a river valley, 4,000 feet below, and into the genuine torrid zone where the scorching sun drives every living thing to cover under its meridian rays and

where all the forms of animal and vegetable life are strictly tropical. You can stand there and readily shoot a rifle ball into the valley. Somewhere on the mountain, the two forms of botanical life, the tropical and temperate, meet. But this meeting point is from the nature of the country, on so sharp a line of demarcation



In the Pines. Lumber Camp of California Mine.

that the two overlap more or less and commingle with a strange effect. This extends to some degree as far as our hacienda. We live in a forest of sugar and yellow pine, oak and madrone, yet rioting in it are palms, gorgeous tree orchids, bamboos, gaudy climbing vines, that stretch from branch to branch in graceful

festoons, and flowers with coloring so vivid that it hurts the eye. Then, all day long thousands of parrots, guacamayas and birds of strictly tropical habitat chatter and make merry in the foliage. To be sure, when it comes to roosting time, they take wing and drop down about 3,000 feet, to get away from the shrewd nip of our nights. So, we live in all the exuberant beauty of the tropics, without the drawbacks.

Amid these pleasant surroundings, in the heart of the great forest that reminds the resident gringos of their far-away State, for it numbers many of the trees peculiar to California, we are building one of the dandiest quartz mills you ever saw, just at the junction of two dashing mountain streams, clear as crystal and as cold as ice. The walls are of beautiful red stone, just like the Flood mansion on Nob Hill—not plebeian concrete such as usually prevails in these parts—and some of the more important timbers are of the finest cabinet hardwood, worth all kinds of money in San Francisco. It looks more like a millionaire's establishment than an hacienda for turning out gold and silver, but a few months hence, when the water power is unhitched and the wheels begin to revolve, it will be otherwise. But all this has nothing to do with the general subject of mining in Mexico, of which I promised to write.

Of all nations of modern times, Mexico has been by far the largest contributor to the world's store of precious metals. Ever since the conquest by Cortez, nearly four centuries ago, it has poured a steady stream of gold and silver into the channels of commerce and trade that has exercised a momentous influence on later history. For the most important immediate effect of the discovery of America was that it opened up new sources of supply of the precious metals. With respect to them, the old world was desperately poor. Barbarian invasion and the anarchy of the dark ages had scattered the once abundant stores of the ancient civilization, and every form of enterprise was hopelessly hampered by the lack of an adequate medium of exchange. In twenty years, the New World gave to the Old World more gold and silver than the latter possessed before the discovery of the former, and the impulse was given to progress and civilization that has never ceased. Mexico

and Peru far outstripped all contributors, with Mexico well in the lead.

Those old Spaniards had marvelous noses for the precious metals. Very little that cropped on the surface eluded their keen scent, and the country is dotted over with the ruins of their forgotten industry. But for obvious reasons, their work was very seldom thorough and comprehensive. Their knowledge of mechanical appliances was extremely limited. If a mine could not be operated through a tunnel, their only means of hoisting was on the



Building a Quartz Mill. The Battery Frame in Place.

backs of peons, who carried huge leather bags up what are appropriately termed "chicken ladders"—mere notched poles set

aslant in a shaft. I have traversed them, hanging on with four sets of nails and my teeth, and then, when I saw a native go sailing up with a hundred and fifty pounds on his shoulders, never deigning to reach for support, I couldn't help saying "You're a bird." If water was encountered, it had to be lifted out the same way. Then, the processes of extraction were extremely crude and tedious, certainly not more than fifty per cent. of the value being saved. The cost of powder for blasting, also, was enormous. So it had to be a rich mine to attract a Spaniard at all, and even then he came to the end of his rope before long. In fact, what they were always looking for was "slipping ore," that is, ore rich enough to be carried to the seaboard and transported thence to Spain for final reduction. And on top of all, the enormous royalty of twenty per cent. was exacted by the crown and collected with merciless precision. So the old Spanish miner did not have such an everlasting snap after all. Yet, in spite of these obstacles, during the first half century after the conquest, Mexico produced over a billion dollars of gold and silver.

It is known that the Spaniards abandoned hundreds of mines for the above reasons while still in good ore. Many of them have been reopened and have produced millions upon millions. But far the greater number have never been rediscovered and remain to reward the explorer's industry. This may seem strange, yet it is a sober fact. In this odd country, you will run upon the ruins of an ancient town, a half wrecked church, large enough to hold a congregation of three or four thousand, the remains of old reduction works and great piles of tailings, all telling of a once-prosperous mining industry. Where did the ore come from? Quien sabe. Nobody knows, and you can search the country round for miles without finding a trace of tunnel, shaft, or beaten track. The explanation is simple enough. During the four months of wet season, at least upon the west coast, the rainfall is prodigious, far beyond anything an untutored Californian can conceive of. When it gets down to business, it takes about seven drops to fill a horse bucket. The water shed is also very steep, and under these combined conditions the erosion is enormous. Slides, boulders and debris come tumbling down from the mountains, and often in a

## A GLIMPSE OF OLD MEXICO

3

few years the whole face of nature in a given locality may be changed. In this way countless numbers of old Spanish works of art have been obliterated through another form of the weather-monger is liable to lay them bare again. Moreover, the same erosion is constantly exposing new ledges that were hidden from the eyes of the ancients. Therefore, because you have prospected a region once without result is no reason why it would not pay well to prospect it again—particularly after a severe rainy season.



Frame of Timber Hewn by Natives, Illustrating Accuracy of Work

In fact, one of the things a newcomer must steel himself against is the stories about lost mines—abandoned during Spanish rule as

above described, or closed down and forgotten in the stormy days of the Mexican Republic. If you fail to heed this advice, you will be a gibbering lunatic in a month. For these are not stories like those current on the mother lode of California, with which we are too familiar, based on the creative memory of some antique moss-back, who remembers to have heard Long Pete tell about a cement streak yaller with gold that Bronco Bill and Rooshian Kate found somewhar near Hog Mountain one day when they rid off from camp on a drunk. The trouble with the Mexican stories is that they are absolutely true. They are founded on official records of unquestioned accuracy and other authenticated documents, and they will conduct you ever so close to boundless wealth, but stop short just when it comes within your grasp. Still, there have been some lucky ones who have followed up these clues to fortune. For instance, I heard of one man, and this incident is strictly authentic, who had been engaged in a hunt for a certain lost mine and, as usual, was slowly going crazy. It so happened that he found a bundle of forgotten manuscripts in the deserted church of the ancient pueblo, and among them a letter from an old employe in the lost mine, addressed to a priest. In it the devout old miner stated that as he came out of the tunnel at night he could see the lights on the altar of the church shining through the door, and never failed to cross himself. The piety of the writer did not impress itself on the prospector as much as the fact that the mouth of the old tunnel must be on a straight line drawn from the church altar to the door and thence produced. He followed his investigations on this theory, actually locating the old tunnel, and now has one of the most valuable mining properties in Mexico.

One more yarn and I am through, though I shall have much more to tell about mining in Mexico. This story is from Col. Burns, who seldom speaks in narrative, and when he does, is wise. A century and a half ago, perhaps more and maybe less, there was a famous mine in the State from which this letter is written. It was the greatest bullion producer of the age, and the king's fifth, or crown royalty, was so large that his Most Catholic Majesty became interested in determining how long the revenue would con-

tinue. For this purpose he dispatched a royal commission to Mexico, comprising three distinguished mining experts. They examined the property and reported that there were one hundred and fifty million dollars in sight, and heaven only knew how much out of sight. Almost immediately after, insurrections broke out, the country was overrun by bandits and Indians, and the mine was closed down. Many years later when it was sought for to exploit again its marvelous treasures, not a trace of it was to be found. As to the existence of the mine, there is not a shadow of doubt. The report of the Spanish experts is still extant. The records of the City of Durango tell of the payment of royalty there, of bullion shipments, and of patent rights to the property. We know the names of owners, superintendents, local priests and what not. You can be conducted probably within a rifle shot of the right place. Yet, after continued research, the secret of the lost mine still lies buried in the heart of the Mexican Sierra.

California Mine, State of Durango, Mexico, March 23, 1901.



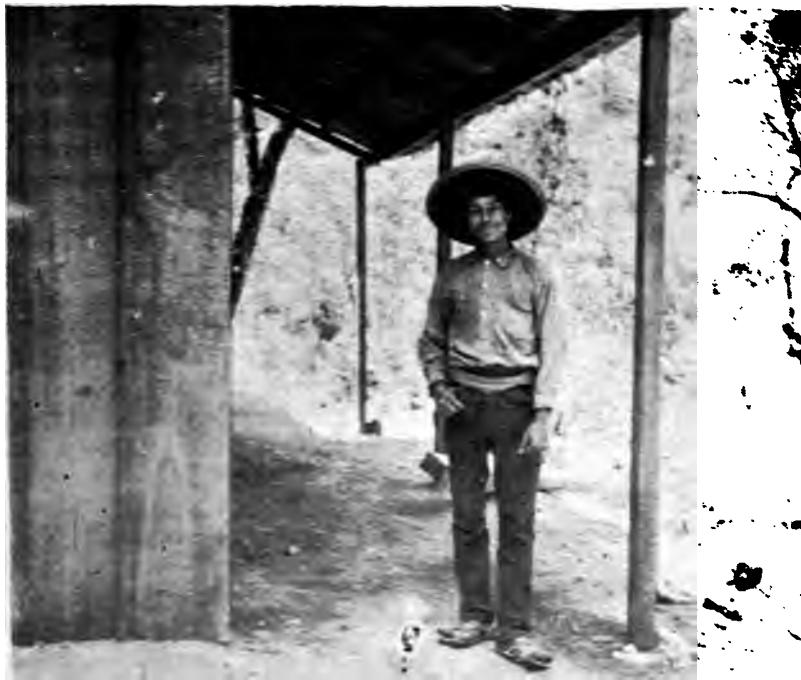
## SEVENTH LETTER.



T is nearly three weeks since I arrived here, and during that time this camp, or "mineral," to use the technical phrase of the country, has been the busiest place in the district. The machinist, the mason, the carpenter and plain ordinary peon have been plying their respective vocations industriously. Long lines of mules and burros have arrived daily, loaded with machinery and supplies, and the scene has always been full of life and animation. But today the sound of the hammer is low and the click of the trowel is silenced and the ringing cry of the *arriero*, exhorting his laggard mules in tuneful blasphemy is heard no more far up on the mountain side. For this is "*la semana santa*," or holy week, the last of lent, during which, for all good Mexicans, the commandment runneth "Thou shalt not work."

I am not quite certain whether this prolonged holiday is observed from a spirit of profound piety so much as from the deeply founded belief that divine punishment will surely follow its breach. If you attempt to argue against it, you will be simply overwhelmed by instances of impious wretches who have dared to labor on these forbidden days and have suffered some awful death in conse-

quence. We are crowding work on our mill with all speed, and yesterday we prevailed on some carpenters to turn out and finish some seasonable work. About noon, one of them banged his thumb nail with a hammer. That was enough. Clearly the incident was a sign of divine displeasure, a timely warning to the rest, which none should presume to disregard. Doubtless this instance will go down to history as an illustration of the perils of toiling during holy week.



Johnny-on-the-Spot.

There is one class of the population, however, not averse to work during holy week, or any other time. These are the Chil-

eros, a kind of Mexican Highlanders. They are born and bred in the lofty Sierra region, are sinewy and athletic of frame, frugal of habit, of marvelous indurance, and inspired mighty little by religious scruples. Added to this, they are the most cheerful and imperturbably good natured fellows that the sun shines on. They are further noteworthy from the circumstance that they actually seem to enjoy work, the tougher the better, a characteristic that I have not often encountered in this imperfect world. They are not backward, either, in bragging about their appetite for toil, which at first is apt to convey the impression that they belong to the familiar "blowhard" genus, but experience generally proves them as good as their word. We have one particular Chilero in our employ who never ceases to amuse me. We call him Johnny-on-the-spot, partly as a tribute to his unfailing punctuality, partly because his true name happens to be Jesus Christ—not an uncommon cognomen in these parts—and it seems a trifle irreverent to be howling for him under that title across arroyos and from mountain tops. I have never yet had the pleasure of seeing Johnny in repose. He is a kind of incarnate perpetual motion machine, and when he is engaged on some sort of a man-killing job, his face fairly beams with happiness. He is handy at almost anything, and is usually a reserve where others fail, but he is especially great as a courier. About once a week, we have occasion to send a messenger to San Dimas. Now, from here to there and back is a deadly ride for a seasoned horseman to make in two days. Johnny covers the round trip in a day and a half on foot, and usually returns with fifty pounds or upward on his back, and it only makes him feel proud. He will then probably put in the afternoon in the pastime of hustling heavy lumber, or something of that kind, and in the evenings he calls on our Superintendent to inquire if he hasn't something more to do. Johnny is a great orator and usually accompanies these final appeals with a speech generally eulogistic of his own good qualities as a "trabajadore." "You know, senor," he will say, "while in your service I will never flinch. Day or night I am always ready. You can drag me from my bed, or call me from my meals, and I will not grumble. You can never give me any task too hard. If you tell me to jump off a precipice, I will do it."

This is nearly a word for word translation of his latest effort, but it lacks sadly the setting of his fantastic gestures and earnestness of speech.

But this has nothing to do with mining in Mexico, except in a remote way, which I started to tell about in my last letter. Not only has Mexico been the largest bullion producer in the world, but it has also had by far the greatest gold and silver mines. Californians have to be rather careful here how they swell up about



Packing Mining Machinery. The miners usually travel on horseback.

the wonderful record of some great project, in their own beloved State, which has turned out say five or six millions of dollars. The

Mexican auditor will probably smile and remark, "Yes, a very nice little pocket." What they call a good mine here is one that has produced say fifty millions, and a big, first class mine is one that has run from one hundred millions upward. And there are plenty, even of the latter. The greatest mine of Mexico, and of the world, is the Valenciana, which has paid royalty on more than one billion dollars produced. Not far from our camp is the Guadalupe de los Reyes mine. It has been worked for a hundred and fifty years and is still turning out nearly two million dollars a year. The famous Candelaria mine, also in this neighborhood, was opened in the year 1767 by a Spaniard named Zambrano. In the first ten years of his ownership, he paid royalty in the City of Durango on fifty-five million dollars of bullion. This mine has been worked off and on since then, made many a fortune, and was finally shut down and practically abandoned. Messrs. Burns and Waterhouse bought it for a trifle, opened up lower levels, took out millions upon millions, and now, as stated in a former letter, have struck new ore bodies of great extent and enormous richness. Similar instances, without number, could be mentioned. In fact, the bottom has never been reached of any of the great mines in this district. The Candelaria, in its old age, is producing over half a million a year. With the new plant in operation, this will be more than doubled and there is every reason to believe that it will keep up that average for another century yet.

Nearly all these mines carry both gold and silver. The impression prevails in the United States that Mexico is almost exclusively a silver mining country, but the fact is that most of the veins operated carry gold enough to justify their being worked for that metal alone. In our own country, four dollar rock in a favorable location is looked on as a good enough thing for anybody. Nearly all the mines in this neighborhood carry that much gold, and from ten dollars upward of silver, which is not a bad thing to have as a bi-product. And my impression is that mining can be carried on cheaper here than in any other part of the world.

Notwithstanding the work of four hundred years, no one can visit Mexico without being convinced that mining here is still in its infancy. Either wood or water for power is considered an es-

sential, and when these are not at hand, no attempt has been made to develop promising ledges. Yet there are great streams, descending rapidly from the mountains, whose energy could be converted into electric power and carried on wires from one location to another. Two or three such plants, costing perhaps half a million dollars, would make the wheels turn in not less than a hundred mines now lying idle in the San Dimas District. But



Packing Mining Machinery. Arrival of a Train.  
aside from mines that are undeveloped from lack of cheap and con-

venient power, the prospector has here an immense field in which the conditions are generally favorable. There are many ledges, well worthy of exploration, that have never been cut, and old Spanish workings that usually prove profitable when opened up, and sometimes lead to immense bonanzas. But it requires money to do all this, and for the lack of it many a promising property lies idle. For, be it understood, this is not a poor man's country for



Breaking Milling Machinery. The Pile to the Left is Home-made Lime for Masonry.

a miner. You never can carve out a fortune here with no greater capital than a strong pair of arms, a pick and a shovel. You must

have the scut—nor is much as you need to develop a mine in California, but nevertheless, a fair sized purse.

A number of circumstances have combined to impede the mining industry in Mexico and prevent the investment of foreign capital. In the first place, the misadministration of the country in former times was an insuperable barrier. Some fifteen or sixteen years ago, when the Diaz administration had succeeded in enforcing something like order thousands of mining men swarmed into Mexico, principally on the west coast. It was then that an epidemic of yellow fever, imported by a theatrical troupe from Havana, broke out in Mazatlan and spread rapidly through the mining regions. Hundreds of foreigners left and the remainder departed with more alarm than they name. The country gained an ill repute from this incident from which it has not fully recovered to this day, though not another case of yellow fever has been reported since on the west coast. Then came the drop in silver values, the end of which no one was able to foretell which at one time cut the former profits of mining in two. But of all causes of distrust, the chief culprit has been the many failures and immense losses occasioned through investments made by parties who had never been in the country, knew nothing about the conditions, and to make matters worse, exposed their interests to ignoramuses or knaves. The follies committed in the name of mining by companies organized in St. Louis, New York, England and elsewhere pass all belief. Mexico is dotted over with the most weird and awful machinery, constructed without the slightest idea of the work in hand, transported thousands of miles at a vast expense and finally abandoned before it reached its destination.

One instance may serve to illustrate the almost incredible lack of common intelligence that has marked most mining enterprises here. Not far from us is quite a famous mine owned by a swell English company. There is no use giving its name; suffice it to say that half the nobility in the tight little isle are shareholders, even such an exalted personage as Her Royal Highness, the Princess Beatrice, being interested. The story goes that the mine was "salted" on the blooming British expert who examined it for his titled clients, but, however that may

be, the company proceeded to develop the property, and by some perversity of fortune actually blundered onto a great body of rich ore that nobody dreamed of being in the neighborhood. Of course, that meant a big quartz mill. Now, the mine in question is located in the heart of one of the finest forests in the world, where native woodsmen can hew out on the spot beams of any dimensions at an almost nominal cost. This would usually be re-



The Hunting Party. T. W. Tompkins, Frank Moseley, J. H. Wilkins,  
Harry Wilkins.

garded as a most acceptable piece of good fortune, but did the English shareholders take advantage of it? Far from it. Every

stick of lumber for that mill was framed in the city of London, shipped across the Atlantic Ocean, carried by mule teams eight hundred miles to the City of Durango, where the remarkable discovery was made that the great pieces of lumber could no more be carried over the remaining hundred and fifty miles of steep and tortuous mountain trail than the Pyramid of Cheops. A desperate effort was made to get some of the lighter stuff through, but it finally stranded about thirty miles outside of Durango, where it remains to this day. These eyes have seen it.

The mine is a marvel. The mill was subsequently built with the local timber, the wheels turned and the bullion commenced to grind out. Then the stockholders began to send their younger sons and ne'er-do-wells and saddle them on the enterprise as assistant superintendents, deputy assistant superintendents, and vice deputy assistant superintendents, until there was an official list as long as your leg, and every man jack of them with a peach of a salary. The young gentlemen maintain no end of style, keep up golf links, lawn tennis grounds and a polo course, take their diurnal tubs regularly, have their boots "cleaned" and go to work every morning in tennis flannel suits, with trousers carefully turned up at the bottom. Yet, with all this, the mine pays, and it stands perhaps as a solitary instance where continued mismanagement has failed to wreck a property of this kind.

Well, I must finish the mining dissertation later on. The California mine and works are now closed down tight. All the Mexican population has departed for San Dimas, where during the holy week the mescal will circulate merrily for social entertainment and the greater glory of God. So we gringos have an unsought holiday on our hands and tomorrow set out for a grand eight days' hunting trip. We are going to one of the wildest and most unfrequented sections of the Sierra, where bear, tigers, wild boars and deer abound, where wild turkeys are thicker than chip pies in California, and a large and gamey trout haunts the mountain streams. There will be four gringos in the party, Senores Don Tomas Tompkins, Don Francisco Moseley, Don Enrique Wilkins and Don Santiago del mismo nombre, also Johnny-on-the-spot and several fellow Chileros. I give the names, as

this expedition is likely to prove famous, for if I fail to make  
Teddy Roosevelt look like a ten-cent piece when I write up the  
story of it then this pen will have lost its cunning.

Wonder how much some of the San Francisco sports would  
give to be with our crowd?

California Mine, State of Durango, Mexico, April 2, 1901.



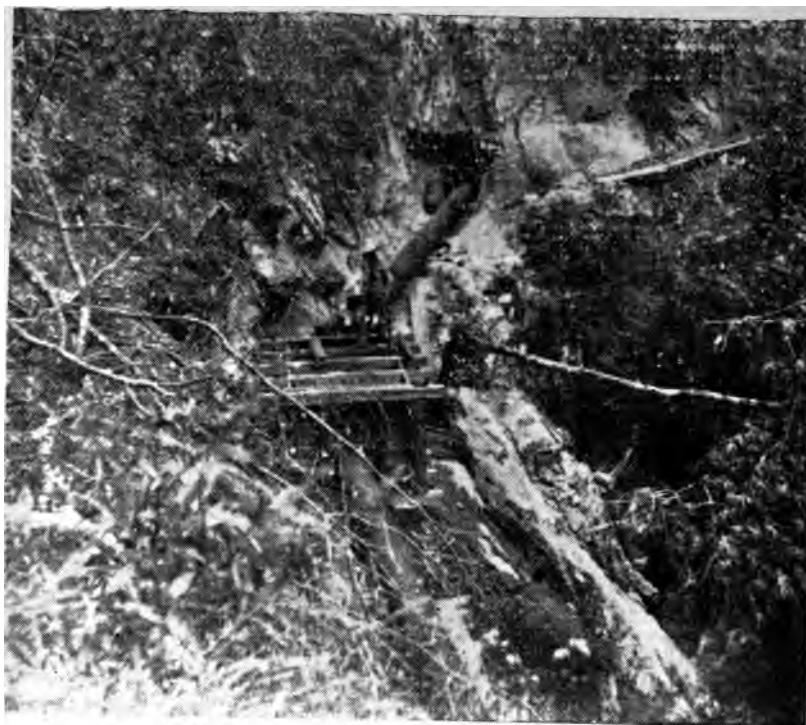
## EIGHTH LETTER.



HAVE attempted to convey some idea of mining in Mexico in a general way. To put the situation more exactly, I will enumerate briefly the reasons why this country *ought* to command the attention of mining men the world over. First and foremost, because the real thing is here. I have already given an idea of the enormous production of past ages and the great revival of the industry within recent years. Yet I am not giving my own valueless opinion, but the mature judgment of every capable mining expert who has visited Mexico, when I say that the surface has barely been scratched, that there are still countless prizes to reward the prospector's enterprise, and that when capital finally directs its magic influence this way in earnest, the land of the Montezumas will become, once more, by far the greatest contributor to the ever increasing demand of civilization for the precious metals.

But gold and silver do not by any means constitute the only great mineral resources of Mexico, although until very recent years they have been the sole objects of the miner's quest. Outside of these, the mineral wealth of the country is enormous, but still almost entirely undeveloped. Some inquiry has been made for copper properties, since the great advance in the price of that metal, and agents of foreign capitals are busily examining prop-

ositions of this kind. One mine, the Santa Rosalia, located on the Gulf of California, is now rivaling the great producers of our



Constructing a Pipe Line for Power. Mouth of Tunnel and Settling Tank.

time. It is owned by a French company, and during the year 1900 is said to have paid dividends amounting to forty million francs (about \$7,200,000). Large plants are being installed at many other localities and Mexico will soon take a foremost place in the copper industry.

Some of the most remarkable iron deposits of the earth are found in Mexico and remain as a rule to this day untouched by man, and in most cases, not even under private ownership. The

Iron Mountain, a mile or so from the City of Durango, is a large hill one solid mass of nearly eighty per cent iron ore. Aside from the enormous amount of metal, aside it has also been ascertained that it contains a large deposit beneath the surface the whole constituting what is believed working in Texas the



Constructing a Power Line. A Mexican Prestle

deposit. The story goes that when the late Mr. C. P. Huntington extended his railroad system to Durango, it was largely because of the traffic possibilities presented by this marvelous property, and it is said that he was negotiating for its purchase when the

hand of death checked his busy brain forever. I have been reliably informed that there is a still larger iron mountain in Southern Mexico, and countless others of minor importance which, in the fullness of time, will be developed profitably.

It is known that extensive coal fields exist in many parts of Mexico, but scarcely an effort has been made to uncover them. A noted mining expert informed me that probably the largest anthracite bed in the world was in a remote, and at present inaccessible, section of the State of Sonora. It is likewise known that there are coal veins in the country drained by the Yaqui and Fuerte Rivers. In many places, there are strong indications of petroleum, and beyond all question, important oil districts will soon be discovered. But so far as the latter industry is concerned, it is substantially unexplored.

Zinc and lead deposits are numerous, but neglected. The former has been overlooked entirely and the latter worked only as a bi-product in the treatment of the precious metal ores. Other forms of mineral wealth occur, that need not be enumerated here, that remain unnoticed. The miner's research has extended only to the precious metals, and in a smaller way to copper. Outside of these, the field is practically a virgin one, that will repay richly those who have the energy and capital to exploit it scientifically and systematically.

Another advantage that the miner enjoys here is the remarkable liberality of the laws relating to his occupation. He is regarded as an individual who deserves special encouragement, for his enterprise gives employment to hundreds of thousands and injures no one. I have already referred to the very lenient system of taxation. Another immense item is the fact that the entire area of Mexico is open to exploration, except within the limits of pueblos or towns and on territory used for governmental purposes. Ownership of the surface of land does not carry with it title to the mineral wealth below and anyone who discovers a deposit of mineral has the absolute right to denounce or file on it and carry on his mining operations, no matter who holds the title deeds to the top of the ground. He can also denounce an hacienda, or mill site, and whatever more may be necessary to con-

duct his business to the best advantage. If he needs wood or water, no grasping landlord can extort an exorbitant price for these prime necessities. If the miner and the landlord cannot agree on terms, the former notifies the latter that he has appointed Senor —— to represent him in fixing rates. In eight days, the



Constructing a Power Line. A Native Retaining Wall.

land owner must nominate a like representative. These two, with the local Judge of the First Instance (Superior Judge), form a board of arbitration, which must convene, consider the case and render a decision within eight days, fixing legally the prices that may be charged. An appeal lies from this decision, but in the meanwhile the miner can go ahead and take wood and water at

the figures named by the arbitrators. As a matter of fact, these decisions are scarcely ever appealed from, nor is it even necessary often to have recourse to boards of arbitration. The miner's remedy being speedy and decisive, arrangements are usually made without serious friction on either side; and it may be said here that a little of this summary way of dealing out justice might be copied in the United States to the general advantage of litigants. In other words, the miner here holds the top hand at all stages of the game. In California, after he finds a mine, as like as not it will be rendered valueless because some unconscionable fellow owns the only accessible water and timber and will not allow him the use of these essentials except on terms that are practically prohibitive. Again, exploration in our State is practically limited to the public domain, constantly lessening in area, for it is small comfort to find a mine on another man's land and receive only his thanks for your trouble.

Then you have a very efficient, cheap and contented class of laborers to deal with. The Mexican miner is industrious to the backbone, is native born to his trade, for his forefathers have worked in the same groove for generations, and he is perfectly satisfied with his lot. There are no unions, walking delegates or strikes or friction between employer and employee, providing the former treats his men half-way decent. He must pay them promptly, have some regard for life and limb about his works and not attempt to overreach them too outrageously in general matters of business. When these plain conditions are disregarded, there is trouble of the passive kind and lots of it. That is, when a mine once gets a bad name by reason of ill-treatment of its employes, you might as well try to move the Sierra Madre as induce a Mexican to work in it. Valuable properties have been compelled to close their works, and keep them closed through the folly of their management in dealing with their men. But accord them fair treatment and they are as easy a lot to get along with as I ever met. The general scale of wages here is about half that in the United States, payable in Mexican money. The cost of living, however, is about correspondingly less. The Mexican miner could lay by a tidy sum against a rainy day if he wanted to, but he

doesn't. Most of his money goes into the alimentary canal of himself and family, although he is by no means given to fine raiment. If there is any balance after the great bill is liquidated in one ~~mass~~ of extravagance things are reversed in Mexico. The gringo's nose is held rather steadily at the grindstone to keep his females in beatitude. Here the woman wears neither hat, no



Constructing a Power Line. A Tough Stretch

bonnet, but the vanity of the men in this direction is monomaniac and limitless. To own a swell sombrero is the crowning ambition of a Mexican's life. These sombreros are gorgeous affairs, costing from fifteen dollars up into the hundreds, and it is astonishing

to see the kind of people who acquire property rights in extremely fine ones. This weakness is worked on with deadly effect in the stores. When a Mexican with a shabby tile enters, a salesman invariably requests the privilege of trying an expensive sombrero on him. Then, if he can be induced to look at himself in the glass, his doom is sealed. He will make any sacrifice, discount the future and tie himself up in all sorts of financial knots to own that hat. Therefore, it frequently happens that you will see a Mexican strutting proudly along under a hundred dollar hat, the balance of whose raiment would be dear at six bits.

I can merely enumerate briefly a few of the remaining conditions favorable to the mining industry, and I refer here only to the States of Durango and Sinaloa, so far as I am familiar with them. The ores are generally of a free milling character, yielding to the cheap processes of amalgamation and cyanide. Wood and water, those prime necessities, are plentiful and as a rule easily accessible. Lastly, the walls of ledges are generally so hard and durable that they will stand without timbering, which in many localities entails an enormous bill of expenses.

Then, it is only fair to give the other side, for there are certainly some serious drawbacks to mining in Mexico. The principal and perhaps only grave one is the matter of transporting heavy machinery and supplies. I have been here six weeks assisting as best I might in the construction of the California Mining Company's mill and can write on this subject with the profound emotion of personal experience. Man can engage in no more heartbreaking job. The trails in this section, leading from the seaboard, are so bad that the worst in our country look like speed tracks by comparison. They traverse arroyos littered with rocks as big as a church, skirt chasms and precipices that make your hair lift when you look down, and cross mountain ranges ten thousand feet high by grades almost as steep as going up a chimney. When it comes to packing several hundred tons of machinery and supplies over such a route, perhaps you can gather some idea of the undertaking, and perhaps you can not. The trails are only open seven months in the year, for during the rainy season they are impassable, and in that period you must somehow get your luggage into

camp. You are absolutely dependent on the mule for motive power and the mule is dependent on the muleteer, who is a mighty irresponsible fellow. He leaves Mazatlan with your freight all right enough, but when he will reach his place of destination is another thing. He loathes to handle machinery at any price and if he chances to hear of desirable freight at some other point, he will drop your cargo by the way, run off after the other stuff and return to your invoice when he gets good and ready. When I



A MULETEER DRIVING HIS TEAM UP A MOUNTAIN SLOPE.

came from Mazatlan I was given a mule and a team to haul my power plant up a steep mountain slope. The muleteer who

## LIMPSE OF OLD MEXICO

to the mine, and it has only been by dint of superhuman exertion and powerful official influence that we have finally succeeded in getting things pretty much in shape. Then, what you want first, always comes last, and you have to hold down the safety valves of your temper while train after train winds into camp with loads of material that you cannot possibly go to work on till something else arrives. All this entails endless vexation and expense, but in the nature of things, it is only temporary. Finally your plant is all together and in operation, after which your serious troubles are at an end.

But, even if there are some drawbacks here, Mexico is all right and will soon regain its reputation as the world's greatest mining country. If the money wasted on fool projects at Nome last year had been diverted our way, it would have developed by this time the boom of the age.

I cannot tell you about our great hunting and fishing trip into the high Sierra Madre further than to remark that it was a James Dandy, only we almost froze to death every night. We got right into the heart of the bear, deer, wild turkey and trout region, and if we didn't have fun to the filling of our bellies, then my name is something else. But this subject deserves a letter by itself. Hasta la vista.

California Mine, State of Durango, Mexico, April 13, 1901.

## NINTH LETTER.



FTER you have jogged along through life beyond the turning of the ways and watched the milestones marking the thirties and most of the forties speed swiftly by, did it ever occur to you what it would mean to feel like a boy again, be it for ever so short a time? Not that I consider childhood the happiest part of

human existence by considerable, for it is full of its own troubles, big and small. It is a period of dependence and of restraint that are felt then far more than we realize in after years. If you doubt that statement, think of the kid who has to march off to a dingy school on some glorious spring morning, while his little heart is full of birds and woods and flowers and all the inspirations of the season. Recall, as you probably can, how your very soul used to revolt against acts of tyranny, perhaps imaginary and perhaps not, for a boy does not always have a square deal. Remember how you have laid awake at nights and dreamed of the time when you would be big and strong enough to lick the school teacher who had just disciplined you. Then consider, as your half-forgotten experience will doubtless enable you to do, what a tough lot boys are with each other, how the weak are set upon, how merciless they are to the sensitive and shrinking. I held my own

fairly well with my early contemporaries, yet I never can forget one day, almost forty years ago, when I went to school in a Little Lord Fauntleroy suit of black velvet and the jibes and jeers I suffered with a breaking heart on that occasion from a lot of young demons, before I returned home and took that suit off, never to be worn again. No, if you think it over dispassionately, childhood is not all that it is cracked up to be, even when your lives are cast in pleasant places. Nor is early youth altogether



Mountain Scenery. Sierra Madre.

the idyllic age that the poets assure us it is. The romping and flirting with the girls is all well enough but that is only an inci-

dent. The average young man who is suddenly thrust into the world to make his own way is of all created things the most helpless. He realizes it so thoroughly that many a poor fellow gives up the struggle in sheer despair and falls by the wayside. He must endure the scolds of his elders who never seem to recollect that they too were once raw beginners, be thankful for a begrudgingly income that will not permit of the legitimate pleasures he longs for and through it all see no certain rift in the clouds that darken his destiny.

I have been through it all and at this stage of the journey, as I compare the present with the past, I can say without a moment's hesitation, give me comfortable middle age, every time. When you have hewed out a secure place in the world for yourself, have outgrown the sordid cares of keeping the wolf from the door and making both ends meet, when you are able to look on things like a philosopher with a mind broadened by experience, when you can go home to a happy family at night and withal still enjoy health, strength and faculties unimpaired, then I am very sure that man is at the time when life means more for him than any other. The only trouble is that the colors of middle age are not fast. They begin to fade altogether too soon, almost as soon as you begin to learn how rich and strong they are.

But for all that there is something about boyhood that few of us forget in later years—it is then that we feel the thrill of expanding life, the sense of development, physical and intellectual, and the buoyancy of growth. What an intense appetite for fun we used to have when it came our way and how short the days used to seem. How easily sleep came to us with the night and it wasn't any trouble to get out of bed in the morning, even if the frost was on the lawn. Yes, that marvelous exhilaration of youth and untiring energy, we remember only too well as we start down the long toboggan amid the lengthening shadows and when we recall them in fancy, a sigh comes surging up from the depths, laden with the refrain, "Would I were a boy again."

I have made that reflection once or twice and behold! the wish has been realized. I am forty-seven years old and just but for eight days I have been a boy once more, just as sure as two and

three make six. And there wasn't any fairy god-mother work about it either; for the matter of that mine has probably become too aged and sedate to be playing pranks any more. It was just the purely natural results of our outing in the high Sierras, an experience open to anyone who cares to try it. In a former letter, I spread myself about the climate at the California mine and I do not wish to take back a word of it now. But the climate of the lofty Mexican mountains is a veritable inspiration, a thing "sui



In the Mexican Sierra—a Picturesque Gorge.

generis," incomparable and indescribable. It gives you the sensation of walking on air and a suggestion that at last you have found the object of Ponce de Leon's fruitless quest. Then you

1. SAWMILL F. A. 1911.

4

have the name of the timber to go with it. I have a lot of  
your logs and your plans. We started out to get the timber  
but we had to go to the sawmill to get the logs. We got  
through with our logs right off the right way. Then we had  
back the logs to the sawmill. Then we had to get the logs  
through the sawmill and then we had to get the logs  
out. I think that is the way we got the logs.

11



1. SAWMILL F. A. 1911.

long, long ago. I think it is a good place to go. It is  
cheap to have a place to go.

but I intend to repeat the experiment at least once a year hereafter at a far less price.

We left the California mine on April 30, with a well stocked commissary department, eight sons in all, four gringos and four Mexicans. Mr. Frank Moseley elected to stay by the works and an employee of the Mexican Gold and Silver Recovery Company took his place, with the usual mozo attendant. A Rurale happened into camp the night before, scented a good time from afar and joined our forces. His first name was Manuel—I never inquired the balance of it—and a better man for roughing it never stood in shoe leather. We rode over a lofty range in the early morning, followed a long ridge for several miles and plunged down into a vast and precipitous canyon, known as the Arroyo Santa Barbara. It was a risky sort of a descent here and there; several times we had to dismount and help our mules down by the tail, a courtesy which the sagacious animals understand and appreciate. But at length we emerged from our difficulties on a beautiful grassy meadow luxuriant with rich feed, through which a dashing mountain stream ran, clear as crystal and cold as ice. This secluded and almost inaccessible valley was a famous lurking place for bandits a quarter of a century ago, or less. The ruins of their old well built log houses still stand. Here, on a carpet of pine needles, we spread the generous contents of our grub box which were attended to with the gusto of a mountain appetite. A few minutes after we had started for the afternoon ride, we had our first experience with that king of game birds, the Mexican wild turkey or cocano. We were proceeding in leisurely fashion through the timber with the silence that usually follows a square meal when one of the Mexicans in a hushed voice hissed the word, "cocanos." There they were, a flock of probably fifty of them. We had come upon them by surprise, a rare thing indeed, for the wild turkey is the wariest of game. I had heard about the immense size and weight of these birds but never before realized the truth of it till I saw them in a state of nature. Why, the finest Christmas turkey in California would look like a square alongside of one of these mighty gobblers. There was one old patriarch in the group that seemed nearly as tall as the

Eiffel Tower and after seeing him I am quite ready to admit that the Mexican wild turkey often weighs fifty pounds. Well, if we surprised them, they surprised us. Not a gun was ready and though we slid off our mules and got them out of the scabbards with nervous haste, by the time we had cleared the decks for action, the birds were zig-zagging through the timber with that deceptive trot of theirs. However, we made a run for it, endeavoring to come to close range and ever and anon blazing away



A Mexican Faisan.

at an illusive turkey in the vain hope that a case of nigger luck would bring him down. Fortune nearly came my way. My nephew started in pursuit of the aforementioned colossal gobbler

and turned it down a long ridge. It occurred to me that I could make a short cut and head it off and I proceeded to execute this manoeuvre at the imminent risk of chest foundering, for running in these altitudes is rather hard on the wind. My calculations were all right in one way; for I intercepted the gobbler at close range and had I carried a rifle his shrift would have been short. Unluckily, I was armed with nothing better than a shotgun. I gave him both barrels as he turned but it seemed only to put more ginger into his heels. As I hung to a tree, in a vain effort to catch my breath again, I watched him climb a ridge, reach the crest, halt a moment to look back and smile at me, just a trifle sadly, I thought, and then he was gone forever.

The truth might as well be told. This was our luck all through the outing so far as turkeys were concerned. We could hear them gobbling and perhaps see a dozen or more disappearing like ghosts in the timber but we never had a dead man's chance of bagging one. We made our fatal mistake when we tied poor Dewey up before our departure. A dog is absolutely essential to wild turkey hunting. A setter or pointer will easily outrun them and make they fly into the trees and nothing else will induce them to take wing. Once in a tree, the most astute and experienced gobbler will pay no attention to a hunter whatever. His eyes and thoughts are all fixed on the dog and it is simply a matter of walking within range and bowling him over. Remember this and you will never be short of turkey in the Mexican mountains. Otherwise my experience will be yours.

This part of Mexico is particularly rich in its variety of gallinaceous game birds, their habitat being influenced more or less by altitude. There are at least seven varieties of them within the scope of a day's hunt of our mine. First and foremost, there is the gorgeous and imperial wild turkey. Next in order is the faisan, which resembles a turkey in its long neck, throat wattles and general make-up a good deal more than a pheasant, the Spanish name for which it bears. It weighs about twelve pounds, has a fine gamey flavor, but is the most idiotic of birds, apparently going out of its way to be killed and therefore gives the true sportsman little joy. The cut herewith represents Johnny-on-

the Spot and your humble servant supporting a recently slaughtered faisán. Then comes the queche or chachalaca resembling the faisán but much smaller and more handsomely plumed. Likewise not overburdened with intellectual gifts. I have written of the queche in a previous letter. There is also a true grouse.



In the Mexican Sierra.

though very rare in these parts, for I have not seen over four or five specimens. Two distinct and very large kinds of mountain quail are numerous. These are genuine game birds, strong of wing and remarkably puzzling flyers when first flushed. No apprentice with a shotgun can land them. Last of all there is the

valley quail similar to our Californian quail, but smaller, very game and toothsome no end. These make a royal collection for the sportsman and the field is likely to remain a good one for years to come, as the birds are absolutely unmolested by the native population. Shotguns are unknown in these parts and anyhow the average Mexican has the utmost contempt for the smaller game. A deer is about the smallest thing he cares to bother with.

But to resume, after the turkey incident, we went climbing upward till we reached the summit of a great flat ridge that stretched out to the eastward, beautifully diversified with forest and open glade. Deer were crossing our path every few minutes and a couple of them tried it once too often. We could have killed a dozen just as easily but we were honest sportsmen and had no wish to slaughter wantonly.

We found a spring of sparkling water late in the afternoon and went into camp. My aneroid informed me that we were just a shade over 11000 feet above sea level and later on when the cold began to pinch it wouldnt have surprised me to learn that we were five miles up in the air. I was all right, for like an old campaigner I had brought enough blankets along to load a mule. But how those poor devils of Mexicans lived through the night I never will understand. They had a serape apiece, about as thick as a light shawl and this is their regular covering by night, whether they are sojourning on the tropical coast land or camped on the lofty sierra, where the theremometer gets down close to the zero point before day break. On this occasion, they curled up in their serapes and calmly went to sleep with half a yard of leg sticking out. Now and then, one of them would mutter "caramba" get up, stir the fire, hang over it until his clothes fairly smoked and after thus hoisting on board a satisfactory cargo of heat, return once more to the arms of Morpheus. But even with this adjunct their capacity to assimilate cold was wonderful. I never saw the like of it before.

We were up betimes, anticipating the sun somewhat and eating breakfast with a crisp white frost covering the ground. An hour or so later, you could hardly realize that it had ever been cold, so generous was the sunshine, so soft and balmy was the breeze. By noon we were camped on the banks of a bewilderingly beautiful

trout stream, ideal for the angler's craft, replete with waterfalls and long dark pools and no underbrush to hamper operations. I had a regulation dude outfit, split bamboo rod, fly book, reels, spoons, fish basket, etc. and I went to work in scientific fashion, as will be seen from the subjoined snap shots. The others cut poles that looked like base ball bats, tied on lines and hooks baited



Catching My Biggest Trout.

with grasshoppers or grubs and if the sad truth must be told, were yanking trout out of the water rather more rapidly than myself. The fact is the season was not propitious for fly fishing. It

was early for the insect life that later swarms the air and the speckled darlings, dependent on food from other sources, did not rise enthusiastically. As I didn't want to be beaten at the game, I did a little bait fishing of my own and soon silenced the laugh that had started at my expense.

The Mexican trout closely resembles the rainbow variety, only



A Small But Well Stocked Stream.

the markings are stronger and the colors more vivid. They do not grow to enormous proportions and a pound fish is a very large one here. From six to ten inches is about the average of the catch but to my way of thinking this is the ideal size. For

firmness of flesh and delicacy of flavor they can not be surpassed the world over. Like the feathered tribe, they are practically unmolested by man. Several gringos from San Dimas come once a year to fish in one of the creeks in this neighborhood and catch perhaps a few hundred during a stay of three or four days, but that is about the sum of human depredations. The stream we first tackled had never been fished before—at least an old Chilero-gentleman residing in the neighborhood so informed me. He claimed to have lived on the creek for upwards of seventy years and had never seen or heard of any angling there previous to our coming.

These mountain fastnesses have a sprinkling of population. Here and there, the rugged gorges broaden out into small valleys with a soil well suited to the cultivation of maize and in these you will usually find a family installed and a pretty big one at that. Here are the breeding grounds of the Chileros, those hardy mountaineers who descend periodically to the lower levels and astonish the onlookers with their strength, activity and willingness to work. A finer race physically it would be hard to find. Instead of the sallow complexion prevalent among the lower classes of Mexico, the red blood tinges their cheeks in a way very agreeable to look upon, especially when the object is one of the gentler sex. Among the women, I saw some of the finest complexions it has ever been my pleasure to behold. While not very tall, they are superbly proportioned and have an unusual chest development, that I take is due to the natural enlargement of the lungs to compensate for the attenuated atmosphere in these high attitudes. At all events, they suffer no inconvenience of breathing under heavy exertions and climb the steepest hills like goats where an ordinary lowlander would have to take a rest every ten steps.

Their habits of life are simplicity itself. They know nothing about intoxicants, use tobacco sparingly, if at all, and corn, worked up into tortillas, comprises about four-fifths of their diet. They are absolutely ignorant of the luxuries of civilization and likewise of the penalties they entail. The long array of physical afflictions that hover over crowded centers and stand continually like horrible specters to fill us with a haunting dread, find no abid-

ing place in these mountains. Consumption, cancer and the whole group of germ diseases are unheard of, except through passing tradition from the outside world. Smallpox, indeed, occasionally makes an inroad but that is all they have to fear and its ravages are not very fatal. They take it like philosophers when it comes, house themselves and simply permit the disease to run its course, which it usually does in a satisfactory way. I saw a family of about a dozen, some of whom bore honorable scars of a recent set-to with the dreaded scourge, and was informed that every member had been down with it at the same time a couple of years before. All of them pulled through, however, and barring the scars, which were not very pronounced, were none the worse for the experience. The special senses seem to be preserved to a great age. It is the commonest thing to see an aged man or woman with keen eyes, ears that catch every sound and last but not least, with teeth as flawless as in the days of childhood. Those who have suffered the agonies of the damned from morbid molars can best appreciate what that means.

Their life is not very eventful. The appearance of our cavalcade made them perfectly idiotic with delight and their simple hospitality was wide open. Doubtless the story of our visit will be handed down to posterity as a noteworthy incident of local history and later generations will hear of the wonderful strangers who killed birds flying, a feat that never failed to excite astonishment, and who practiced a strange art that induced fish to leave the water on the end of a string. But do not fall into the error of imagining that these people are to be pitied. When I think of their abounding health and buoyant spirits, their long lives without ache or pain, even as old age comes gently on and then remember the wan faces and bent forms only too familiar in the haunts of civilized man: the gouts, dyspepsias and torpid livers, the wearinesses and lassitudes of our abnormal existence and the pills, tonics, castor oil and cocktails with which we vainly endeavor to brace up exhausted nature and stand off the inevitable, then I am more than half inclined to the opinion that the Chilero gentleman has distinctly the best of the game even if he lives in a shack.

and misses the French dinners, tailor made clothes, automobiles and swell mansions that we enjoy.

And thus our eight days in the mountains slipped swiftly by. I promised to thrill you with blood-curdling descriptions of my adventures with the savage tenants of the wilderness and had I once started on that tack my readers would still be trembling with excitement, for my invariable rule is never to spoil a good story for want of facts. But the truth is, we had no experiences of the exciting order. There is no end of big game in the mountains such as lions, bears, leopards and wild boars, but you never see them unless you have dogs to drive them from their haunts. So if a chronicle of every day was furnished, one would be pretty much the same as the other but each was brimful of hearty enjoyment, without an unpleasant incident to mar the whole. Hunting, fishing, good fellowship and the brisk air of the mountains are enough to make any rational man take a cheerful view of existence and when I said I felt a boy again all over, I did not stretch matters a bit.

We took about sixty views of camp life, mountain scenery and of the Chileros and their abodes. Sad to relate, all but five or six proved failures. The intense light and odd atmospheric conditions are apt to play the mischief with amateur photography in Mexico as I have found more than once to my sorrow. In this instance, I regret the loss particularly for our work related to a region upon which no camera had been directed before.

California Mine, State of Durango, Mexico, April 18, 1901.

## TENTH LETTER.



N outline is all I have been able to give in preceding letters of the great mining industry of Mexico, of its impressive past, prosperous present and the limitless possibilities ahead when capital and enterprise unite in developing its mineral wealth. But not alone in that direction is the future bright with promise. Mexico is enormously

rich in agricultural resources, which for the most part are still in the latent state. In certain sections, some attempt has been made to cultivate the soil according to modern methods, but as far as my observation has extended, husbandry is still in a most primitive condition. Improved agricultural machinery is practically unknown. The earth is still broken with a wooden plow, the crops harvested with a machete, the corn shelled by hand and the chaff separated by the breezes. In one particular only do the rancheros display any marked capacity in their work—in the curious art and vast industry devoted to the construction of irrigating ditches. As might be expected under these conditions, agriculture is anything but varied. Two or three staples comprise almost the entire

list. I think that about three-fourths of the energies of the farmer class are devoted to raising corn and beans, the mainstays of life in Mexico. Cattle raising is also an important pursuit, and one of the few that is pushing ahead rapidly at present. Of course, in addition to the above, tobacco culture, sugar, coffee and chocolate growing are carried on in specially favored localities on a



Near the Crest of the Sierra.

more or less extensive scale. Sugar production, in particular is coming rapidly to the front and the apparently authentic figures they give you of the profits of certain haciendas, fairly make the head dizzy. But the diversities of agriculture, such as we are familiar with in the United States, are not found here on an ap-

preciable scale, and some branches are unknown altogether. For instance, I might mention one of special local interest—that of dairying—so far as butter making is concerned. No butter, to the best of my knowledge, is produced in commercial quantities in Mexico. In my travels, I have never seen an ounce of the native product. All of it comes from Sweden in tins of from a quarter of a pound up. An ocean of this stuff is used, although it is a terrible poor substitute for the fresh article, and sells at the dizzy price of \$1.50 per pound, silver, or about eighty cents of our money. Now, while the country on the west coast of Mexico, say for a hundred miles back, is not adapted to dairying, when you climb into the mountains you find the conditions admirably suited. When hunting in the high Sierra some weeks ago, I saw thousands of acres of the finest dairy land, great stretches of grass land, green the year round, and abundant water, coupled with cool and bracing climate. I should rate it at least equal to the best dairy ranches in Marin County, California. The native cows are of little value as milkers, but if some fellow had the enterprise to bring a graded herd of American cows into this section and set up in the dairy business, I have not a doubt that he would make his everlasting fortune in no time. These mountain ranges are still, in many instances, part of the public domain, and where under private ownership, can be purchased at almost nominal prices. I am now treating for one of them myself—a small affair of 13,000 acres—which took my fancy, primarily because it is the finest stretch of country for the sportsman that I ever saw. I verily believe that there are more tons of game and trout on that one ranch than in the counties of Marin, Sonoma and Mendocino combined. If I acquire it, I will give my California friends a permit to hunt there when they visit Mexico, but bags of wild turkeys will be limited strictly to twenty-five. But as soon as I make a good raise in the mines, I intend to take up the dairy proposition on this ranch, if no one gets in ahead of me, and see just what is in it.

I have referred to dairying simply as an example of dormant possibilites. How wide the range of these may be, I am not in a position to state. But it goes without saying that a country that presents every diversity of climate from tropical to north temper-

ate, through variations of altitude, that possesses a fertile soil and a fairly industrious rural population, is still in its agricultural infancy when it has progressed no further than Mexico has today. It is now doing little better than supplying the wants of its own people. In many directions it is not even doing that. Whereas, if its resources were properly exploited, it would be sending its wealth by hundreds of ships to feed the hungry of other lands, just as the sister republic to the north is doing. That there is sure to be an immense boom in agriculture here seems to me one of the most certain things in this shifting world, and that the millions of acres now lying idle and tenantless will soon be dedicated to their proper uses. Therefore, I cannot imagine an investment more sure to yield a rich return in the future than the purchase of real property in Mexico, in those sections where it can be had pretty much at the buyer's figures. The conditions are very much the same as in California in 1849, when ranchos were transferred for a few hundred dollars that are worth millions today. And we have here what we did not have there—an abundance of effective labor to develop our opportunities. I have spoken well of the character of the Mexican miner. The Mexican husbandman is in most respects his equal. The industrial curse of this country, which once stood steadfastly in the way of its progress and gave it the title of the land of manana, was the eternal observance of saints' day. Less than twenty years ago, I am informed that there were only one hundred and sixty-one days per annum when it was permissible for a good Mexican to work. The remaining two hundred and four were either Sundays or days of saints of the first class, to labor on which meant to invite the certain displeasure of God, and probably induce Him to strike the offender dead on the spot. Col. Burns described to me an incident in his early experience in Mexico, illustrating how completely this idea had taken possession of the public mind. He and Mr. Waterhouse had elected to work on one of the most notable holy days, and the entire population of San Dimas turned out and watched patiently till sun-down, expecting to witness the edifying spectacle of their annihilation by an outraged deity. The days of the minor saints were more numerous than those of the year, and of course it was more

## A GLIMPSE OF OLD MEXICO

igious not to work on those either, although it was not compulsory. Therefore, about all the work you could get out of a Mexican of the old school was say a hundred days a year at the utmost. But that has been broken down long ago: All that remains of the prodigious superstition is a strict observance of holy week—the last of lent—and a three days' holiday at Christmas. For the rest, you can find all the labor you want, and a very good quality of it.

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The race that time doth run with swift but silent pace is drawing my stay in Mexico to a close. Tomorrow, I leave for the sea-board, homeward bound, taking with me the memory of six pleasant weeks spent in the Mexican mountains. I must say that I am giving up the free life and returning to what we call civilization with rather a heavy heart. I am not much in love with some of the conventionalities and restraints with which polite society is constantly aiming to circumscribe our actions, without any special good reason for it. I have an honest dislike for the vanities, shams, pretenses, jealousies, heartburnings and eternal regard for outward show that poison life and make good fellowship impossible. I prefer a camp fire in the wilderness to quarters in a palace, a hunting suit to a swallowtail, a mule to a special car and a fellow in any old kind of clothes who will meet me frankly to one of the tailor made pinheads who infest the most exclusive circles. Therefore, during the last six weeks, I have been entirely in my element, have said and done exactly what I pleased and cared never a rap what anyone thought of it. It is hard to break off from such a delightful existence all at once, but I suppose in due time I will get back in the old groove again.

"C Kirk, the well known Klondiker, blew in on us last week, Northland. The gentleman went to Dawson with

the first rush in 1897, made a stake and had the good sense to pull out before his nose and ears were frozen off. His book, "Twelve Months in Klondike," published by a London firm, is by far the best descriptive work on the Klondike that I have seen. Happen-



Leaving the Mine, Homeward Bound.

ing to be in San Francisco, he heard that I was in Mexico and decided that it would be the proper thing to pay me a social call—a trifling trip of only 1500 miles. He worked his way from Mazatlan to the California Mine, through the roughest country on earth, without knowing a single word of Spanish, which I consider something of a feat. He is full of enthusiasm for this coun-

try, as far as he has seen it, and has a mind to settle here if he find a suitable base of operation, which ought not to be difficult in a young man of his energy and talents. He and Superintendent Tompkins will take the long ride with me to Mazatlan, so the journey will not be a lonesome one.

California Mine, State of Durango, Mexico, April 23, 1901.



## ELEVENTH LETTER.



T the interesting hour of 2 o'clock in the morning of yesterday we arrived here, after a man-killing ride of four days. We tried a new and unfrequented trail to get out of the mountains, with the usual results, and paid the corresponding penalty in fatigue and overwork. Not only that, wild hogs wrecked our grub box

the first night out and we had to live off the country as best we might. But the virtue of hospitality is one that never fails in Mexico, and no matter how tough looking you may be, food and shelter are never refused. Nay, they are furnished cheerfully, and when you depart the host bids you make yourself at home if you pass that way again. It isn't exactly Palace Hotel accommodation that you receive, but they give you the best they have, and what can man do more? As often as not, any form of compensation is declined. And it never seems to give the women the slightest trouble to do a lot of extra work for strangers. They are a hard working, good-natured and fair looking lot, these women of Mexico. In my younger days, I should have had more to say about them. There are real beauties among them, and a still larger number can be classed as "simpatica," a Spanish word the nearest English equivalent of which is "attractive" or "pleasing." One thing about them that struck me as a clear reversal of female

human nature was the entire frankness with which they discussed certain matters concerning themselves which a gringo dame would rather die than allude to. For instance, when you find an American lady who is approaching the shady side of life unattached, if the subject of marriage is brought up at all, she will tell



Mazatlán, Looking Seaward.

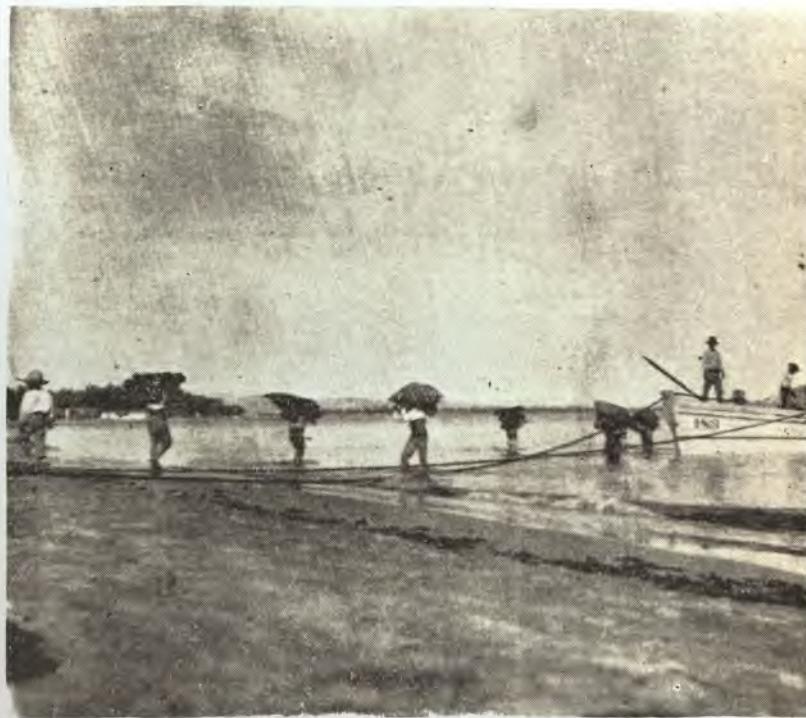
you all about the brilliant offers she has received and the swarm of lovers she dismissed broken-hearted, because she never met a man who came up to her ideals. You may know to the contrary, but that is the story you will get. Now, with the Spanish lady it is otherwise. I was talking one evening with a señorita, a midget of a thing, but so pretty that it made your heart ache to look at her, who nevertheless was accumulating years in single blessedness in a manner highly distasteful. She was an orphan and supported by the good lady with whom she lived, a condition of things that she had been most anxious to terminate by matrimony. She spoke about her efforts in that direction almost pathetically. "I have done my very best, señor," she said; "I have set my cap for every likely young man in the neighborhood and I cer-

tainly cannot blame myself for overlooking any opportunity. But they will not have me. In the meanwhile I have seen girls who were anything but 'simpatica,' whose eyes looked in different directions and had mouths like the gateway of a church, march off with good husbands under my very nose. I cannot imagine what is the matter, unless it be that the men will not take me because I am so little." "But, amiga," I suggested, the thoughtless fellows ought to remember that the most valuable things in the world are always put up in small parcels." "Granting that to be true, señor," she replied, "in my case the parcel is so very small that it is overlooked altogether." Other people may imagine an American woman talking that way. I cannot.

But spinsters are not numerous in Mexico and I doubt not that my little friend has had her wish gratified long ago. The fact is, whether a woman is married or not depends upon many things beside her looks. We constantly see very handsome women given the overlook and pass on, lonesome and neglectd, from youth to that terrible uncertain age; while others who just miss being positively plain never seem to lack admirers and are able to pick their choice. The explanation is not so difficult as it seems. In the first place, men see women through eyes entirely their own and your friend may be able to discover charms in a certain lady which you are utterly powerless to detect. But far more important still is that instinctive faculty of ingratiating themselves with the sterner sex that some women possess and others lack. There is no more edifying spectacle than to watch a really capable, alert and resolute female at her work, to observe how dextrously she finds out a certain gentleman's weakness—just where he is vulnerable and just where she must march around his sensitive points with that curious art of hers. She knows in a moment exactly how far she can go with flattery, without being suspected, exactly how much regard may be manifested, without the appearance of setting her cap. And when that gentleman goes home, sits in his easy chair and thinks how wonderfully that woman understands him, how she appreciates all his good qualities, how she respects and admires him—and how much he deserves it—he is pre-

cious near the matrimonial landing net and will be gathered in before he knows it.

Mexican ladies seem to have this gift developed in a high degree. They are good fellows, like men and tell them so with their eyes, if not otherwise. Their talents carry them rather early in life to the hymeneal altar, and as above stated, spinsters are few and far between.



Unloading Lighters, Mazatlan.

We passed a quiet Sunday in Mazatlan yesterday. That is to say, we took in the sights, which included a brief inspection of a rooster tournament and attendance at the regular weekly bull

fight. These are national pastimes and the latter partakes of the nature of a great social function. Personally, I have no taste for either and dislike both as cordially as I detest pugilism at home. But when one is abroad, it is necessary to have experiences to get a fair idea of national character—and I had them. I came away with none of my previous impressions changed, but rather deepened and the cock-pit and the bull-ring shall see me no more.



Street Scene, Mazatlan.

This prejudice on the part of Americans is looked upon by Mexicans as one of the strangest aberrations of the gringo mind. They themselves have very strong convictions on the subject of

prize fighting. They regard it as a brutal and degrading spectacle which should be frowned down by all good people; and they will argue to any length on the viciousness of the game of football, which risks the lives of promising young men, simply to afford amusement to the multitude. But when it comes to a chicken fight or a bull fight, that is quite another affair. The simple mission of these animals, according to their logic, is to grow up, be killed and eaten, which is not very far from the truth, after all. That being so, the manner of their taking off is a mere matter of detail and if they can contribute to the entertainment of the public in their last moments by displays of courage and steadfastness, what harm is done? Moreover, if the animal had a choice, would it not prefer to perish in combat gloriously, rather than basely submit its neck to the ax or its throat to the butcher's knife? I merely give the argument without passing on its merits.

The most interesting part of a bull fight are the side lights leading up to it. There were eight thousand people in attendance and the enthusiasm of the crowd knew no bounds. The entrance of popular favorites called forth an uproar. Orators attempted to speak and were either howled down or applauded. Then the four queens of the fiesta swept in and took their seats in a special box, whereat the multitude arose and yelled like demons. After that, the fighters and bull number one, were turned loose and the entertainment began. But just about as it was getting to the real interesting part, my chicken heart got the best of me, and I found business elsewhere. So the task of describing a bull fight at Mazatlan must be left to other hands.

And with these words, my story comes to a close. I may linger here a few days and perhaps return by some zig-zag land route, the better to see the country, but I will be in California to talk for myself before another letter could arrive. In the foregoing I have purposely avoided the more ambitious themes and have only endeavored to show you, in my own way, a few live people and some real things. If this has been accomplished, then I am repaid for the expenditure of considerable time and thought; for these letters have not slipped from the writer's pen carelessly,

but, on the contrary, represent many an hour's hard work, just how many it would be embarrassing to admit. But the labor has not been burdensome for the subject is one near to my heart and later on I may write of it more at length.



# HOME AGAIN

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## Hints for Home Use.

Probably the reader who has traveled with me thus far has heard as much of Mexico as he cares to, but there are just one or two observations that I wish to make that ought to be of no little interest to the American people.

The United States is today an expanding nation. I do not mean in the sense of reaching out for territorial acquisitions for that has probably run its course. Our boundaries may be enlarged hereafter, but if so, it will be by the voluntary act of those who desire to enter our national family. Our people have no desire to increase their limits by force of arms and the acquisitions incident to the late war would never have been tolerated by public opinion had not peculiar and unforeseen conditions arisen that to a certain extent forced the issue on the nation. But ours is an expanding country in this sense, that it has entirely outgrown the mere business of looking after itself. It needs outlets for its superabundant products, for the industry and energies of its people, and the demand for wider opportunities in this direction is sure to increase as the years roll on. No chance should be neglected now to establish permanent commercial relations wherever a fair field presents itself.

In letters published during the last two months, the writer has endeavored to give an idea of the remarkable progress Mexico had made in recent years. Not only that, but the possibilities ahead are almost limitless. No one can go through the country with one eye half open, without being impressed with the many

sided resources bestowed upon it by prodigal nature, most of which are still latent, waiting for the hand of modern enterprise to quicken them into life. That it has a great future before it, and a special interest to our adventurous youths, there can be no manner of doubt. For in our own country, the best places at the table are preempted by close corporations. Whole industrial provinces, such as transportation, the manufacture of iron, sugar, mineral, oil and other products, too numerous to mention, are held under the domination of single minds. The average young man here, with the usual equipment of brains and ambition, has a sorry chance to break into this charmed circle. Whereas, in Mexico the field is still open to all comers, just as it was among us half a century ago and industry and thrift are sure of a liberal reward. There is an opening there for thousands of our aspiring youths, who could not only better themselves but also serve as advance agents in establishing trade relations with the mother country of immense value, as events unfold themselves.

Of all the leading industrial nations, we have the great advantage of position in dealing with Mexico. Our borders touch along fifteen hundred miles. The railway systems of the two countries are connected and the principal Mexican ports of entry on the Gulf and on the Pacific are almost at our doors. In the feverish race of international competition, one would suppose that these conditions would easily place us way in the lead commercially with our southern neighbors. But such is far from the fact. Americans cut a respectable figure in the mining industry in Mexico, and are well represented in the professions. They are also doing more or less in certain branches of agriculture and some of our capitalists have been extensive railroad builders. But in the important domain of commerce, they are hardly a factor at all. In that, Europe walks all over us. The single city of Hamburg, I am very certain has a far larger volume of trade with Mexico than the whole United States put together. The city of Mazatlan, for instance, is a most important distributing point for a great extent of country. Its imports last year, so the American Consul there informed me, exceeded \$80,000,000 Mexican money. Here was a plum well worth fighting for. Yet less than one per cent. of this

total came from the United States. Almost every nation of Europe is represented there by one or more large commercial firms. We have none, either big or small. And what is true of Mazatlan is true of the other considerable cities of Mexico. They swarm with German, English, French, Spanish and Italian business houses, but an American concern of the kind is so rare that it is regarded as a curiosity. It forms a sad commentary on our un-readiness to recognize facts of common knowledge. Years ago, we were taught to look down on Mexico, because its government was unstable and its people unprogressive. We have failed to realize, as Europe has, that these conditions have changed entirely, and that it is now a country with which commercial relations should be eagerly sought. The opportunities once to be had for the asking are rapidly slipping from our grasp, perhaps forever.

In my judgment, what has kept us in the background in Mexico more than any one thing is the fact that knowledge of the Spanish language is a very rare accomplishment among us. Probably fifty can speak French or German to one familiar with the Castilian tongue. The independent American will not go where he cannot make himself understood, for his good common sense tells him how insane it would be to embark in business among a people of whose speech he knows nothing. Therefore, he leaves Mexico out of his calculations, even if he has some glimmering idea that it offers unusual inducements to enterprise. But the European man of affairs has no such handicap. Those who are trained for commercial life are taught the languages of countries with which they will probably have dealings, just as much a matter of course as instruction is given in reading, writing and arithmetic. Not only that, but they also make a special preparatory study of trade conditions in foreign lands and trade usages. This is specially true of German commercial men, who are given a finished education that puts all other nationalities to the blush. No German who expects to embark in mercantile pursuits is supposed to have any business training at all who cannot speak at least three or four languages besides his own, and who has not familiarized himself thoroughly with the commercial customs of leading nations. The general mercantile education abroad, in particular,

always gives special attention to the Spanish tongue. In my opinion, this is the whole secret of the remarkable success of Germans and other Europeans in Spanish America and it also tells the tale of American failure. The average young man of the old world who follows trade is made of no better material than the American. On the contrary, our youngsters are generally more resourceful, self-reliant and pushing. But the European lands in Mexico with a full knowledge of the language and trade conditions of the country, while our own unhappy countryman wanders around like a cat in a strange garret and is not in the race for a minute. If anyone wants to have the national conceit taken out of him in good shape, he only needs to see for himself how effete Europe is chasing us off the earth in Spanish speaking America.

But the remedy is in our own hands. We need only to imitate the European system of education to place our people on an even footing and then the game should be easily ours. Just a little travel has satisfied the writer how fatally defective the early training is that takes no account of modern languages and until our system is changed in this respect the American will remain a back number in countries where for every reason he ought to be on top. We teach a vast amount in our public schools that is valuable only for mental discipline and is forgotten promptly as soon as other matters engage the scholar's thoughts. Why cannot we include something distinctly practical, that is bound to be useful as long as the boy or girl lives? There is no reason in the world why every pupil who goes through the public school course should not master two languages and we respectfully submit that the mental drill in acquiring a foreign tongue is quite as valuable as that which comes from digging into various abstractions. If one of these languages should be Spanish, it would work a transformation in our relations not only with Mexico, but with the whole continent south of us to Cape Horn. It would give an opening to thousands and thousands of enterprising young men who would serve as our representatives in clearing the way for the expansion that this country imperatively demands. Unless something of this sort happens, the United States will lose the biggest prize for which commercial nations are contending; for there can be no

nanner of doubt that the greatest developments of the next half century will be in Spanish speaking America. It includes an area far greater than all Europe and richer in natural resources. The world's progress will not permit it to lie comparatively idle longer and when the boom once starts in earnest, it will roll along like a tidal wave. Whether the United States shares in it or not, depends largely on whether we have the good sense to fit our young men to enter the field with some prospect of success; and the indispensible condition is that they be given a thorough instruction in the Spanish language, during the course of study which our public school system provides.

And when we attempt to do business with our Spanish American neighbors, we ought at least to make an effort to meet their customs half way, instead of attempting to cram our methods down their throats. European commercial men are constantly endeavoring to accommodate the trade in every particular while with us it is simply a take-it-or-leave-it proposition. A single instance will illustrate this as well as a thousand. In Mexico, much of the traffic is carried on by the tedious process of mule transportation and for that reason the returns of business are slow. On that account, a long credit system prevails, the usual time allowed a solvent firm being not less than six months. European houses have no objection to this, for the prices are all right and the security ample. In the city of Mazatlan, there has been but one commercial failure in twenty-five years and that was the case of a French firm which was overwhelmed by the collapse of the parent concern in Paris. Yet because our rule is a credit of sixty or ninety days at the utmost, our merchants, especially those in San Francisco, have turned the cold shoulder to no end of the finest kind of business when it was knocking at our very doors. If we persist in this absurd conservatism, we have only ourselves to blame if we continue to stand at the tail of the procession, when we ought to be at its head.

The writer only wishes that he could make this as clear to others as it is to himself. The lesson that anyone must read who travels through Mexico intelligently is so very plain that there is no mistaking it. We are simply going to be frozen out of Spanish

America altogether commercially by our European brethren, unless we adopt the methods that have secured them supremacy. The proposition is so distinct and clear cut that it seems as if the force of it ought to be realized by those to whom it is directly addressed. If not, a later generation of Americans may have ample cause to lament the short-sightedness of their sires.

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THE END. *an* ✓





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